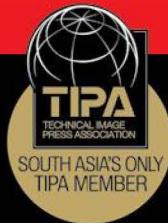


GREAT MASTERS: LAURA LETINSKY'S NUANCED AND LAYERED STILL LIFE NARRATIVES



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January 2016 • Rs. 150
(Total 172 pages + 16 pages Supplement)

WITH
THIS ISSUE
16-PAGE SUPPLEMENT ON MASTERS &
2016 CALENDAR + POSTER BY SRISHI

Better Photography

Better Technique. Better Insight. Better Pictures



EXCLUSIVE TESTS

Canon PowerShot G5 X
Nikkor 24mm f/1.8
Sigma 20mm f/1.4 Art

VISUAL MUSINGS

Bandeep Singh's musings on contemporary photography

CELLPHONE TECHNIQUE

Start the new year with 12 creative photography exercises for your eye

ON ASSIGNMENT

Kaleidoscopic scans of food that are sure to trick you

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Pertinent, important images from mainstream news media

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FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY

Five extraordinary food lovers lay out an eyewateringly Shakespearean feast

EDITORIAL

“Isn’t every frame an accident, perhaps of our own choosing?”



Food for Thought

A year has passed and it's a new year once more. How quickly time flies. Before you know it, one more year would have come and gone. It seems just like yesterday that photography was so very different. It was deliciously slow in process and even naive in its rendition. It was always alive with the promise of discovery. Release the shutter. Stop. Think. Wind the lever. Release. Stop. Think. Wind. Wait. Release. Rewind. New film.

Be it now or then, some things have remained the same. It still takes effort and skill to make a decision. Divide one second into two hundred and fifty parts. Which one would you choose? Or do you let it slide? There is always one more second, one more opportunity around the corner. Over time, and with practice, it becomes an informed choice. With more time, and as we learn to control, we learn to plan things out.

There are happy accidents. Many of them, in fact. Some nice moments captured without looking through the finder. But isn't every frame an accident, perhaps of our own choosing? Sometimes, we let moments slide all to easily. Before we know it, another year has passed along with all its opportunities. I really do think it all comes down to making a choice and committing to it. Perhaps this is the year to start something new, and to do things differently.

This issue has some amazing food photographers, all of who made a choice to start a series, or a project of their own, at some point. I am certain it has not been as easy as all that. To be able to see food so differently must have taken a lot of observation and patience. They have had to work for days, months, often years to put out a well seen, well edited series of excellent images.

We hope you enjoy this issue as much as we had fun putting it together. Here's to a great year ahead, filled with opportunity. Do write in to me and send me your thoughts and ideas on your new projects, and the photographs that come your way.

K Madhavan Pillai
editor@betterphotography.in



Untitled 23
The Dog and the Wolf
Series, 2009

by **Laura Letinsky**

Life seems to be a progression of one idea flowing to meet another for Laura, whose works all seem to have an umbilical connection to each other. "I think photography is a promiscuous medium," says Laura. "It feeds off of itself and it is kind of interchangeable." She goes on to add, "Through photographs, we keep on embellishing reality in a way that is not healthy. It is interesting how photographs can also let you dematerialise the real."

To read more about Laura Letinsky's ideas on photography and on her work — Turn to page 106

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- Visit <http://betterphotography.in/contests> and register yourself on the website
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- Winners of all the contests get featured on our website and can be featured in the magazine too. They will also receive special prizes!

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Our ever curious and passionate love affair with the camera will never cease. And so be it as Better Photography, India's first magazine completely devoted to the art and science of photography presents an expansive imagery like no other can. It is also the best-selling photography magazine in India and South Asia.

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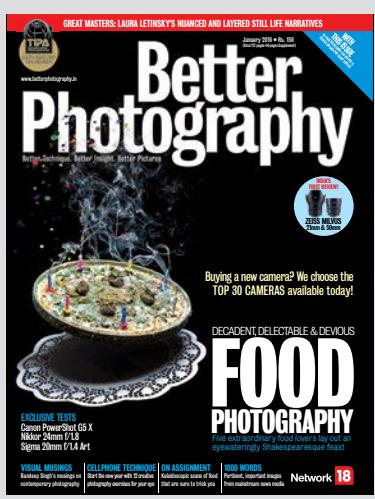
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DESIGN: SANTOSH D KAMBLE

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Our pick of the best cameras you can buy.

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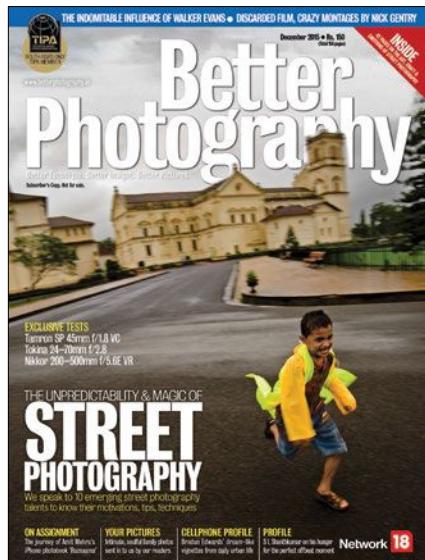
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Feedback

"Let your subjects change you as a photographer rather than you trying to change them."



My Resolution for 2016

I am a lost soul when it comes to street photography. I feel very anxious when I find myself shooting on the street, especially in the midst of a large crowd. Apart from becoming overly conscious of my camera, I am unable to find inspiration in the subjects around me. So at the end of the day, I return home with little to no photographs. However, this changed when I read the December 2015 issue of **BP**, which featured the story 'Where the Streets Have No Name'. I especially enjoyed reading the On Inspiration boxes in the story, which were great sources of encouragement.

And so, I have decided to dedicate the entire year of 2016 towards a personal goal of getting over my anxiety, finding the courage to approach people and learning to view the dynamics of the streets around me, in a completely different light.

Dhaval Phadnis, Surat

Getting Past Your Inhibitions

I have been shooting with my DSLR and phone for well over two years now, and have come to a certain realisation. I have learned that a good photograph is one which possesses the qualities to wordlessly communicate with the viewer, and not one where the photographer has used extensive equipment to create what he thinks is a great picture, but in actuality has no meaning.

Send your suggestions, thoughts, and feedback letters to...
feedback@betterphotography.in
Every month, the 'Letter of the Month' will win a special gift from



With this thought, I would like to urge fellow photographers to give up their apprehensions about making photographs without the right gear.

Yash Muthian, Mumbai

Reality Check

It has been a good three years since I made the switch to shooting weddings full time. Prior to this, I always maintained a very dreamy and easygoing outlook towards wedding photography, and did not realise all the time and effort that actually goes into shooting the grand event.

Reality struck three years ago, when I was handed my first wedding assignment. With the chaotic scene and people rushing all around me, I was left feeling extremely overwhelmed, so much so, that I missed several important moments. Fortunately, the bride and groom were my close friends and had hired an additional photographer to shoot the event.

Since that time, my entire outlook towards wedding photography has changed, and I developed newfound respect for wedding photographers. They are quick thinkers and never miss an opportunity to get the perfect shot, amidst all the frenzy that makes a wedding what it is. Kudos to *Better Photography* for honouring them every year at the Wedding Photographer of the Year Awards.

Niharika Pandit, New Delhi

• The December 2015 issue featured the works of ten of the finest emerging street photographers, who reflected upon their, motivation, technique and inspiration.

• The March 2015 edition of the magazine featured Fabien Charauau's analog images shot on the roads of Rajasthan.

For the Love of Travel

I came across Fabien Charauau's work 'The Way of the Road' in the March 2015 issue of *Better Photography*. As a travel blogger, I loved how he captured the roads



An Introvert Photographer

When I turned 18, I was gifted my first camera by my parents. Eager to make the most of my new gift I started researching fervently and in time I began finding inspiration from many forms of art. The most prominent one being paintings, something that I was already interested in. Over time, I found myself being more inclined towards portraiture and with my new hobby I came to another realisation, that my work is women centric. My images draw influence from the photographs of Francesca Woodman, where she seemed to merge herself with the surroundings, skilfully using movement and long exposures in a very nuanced way.

It all began by taking pictures of all the women in my life. Which included my mother, my grandmother

and my friends. To further my experimentation, I began facing the camera and making self-portraits. By being my own subject, I was able to look at myself from a different perspective.

About one month ago, I started making intimate portraits of women who in my opinion, are powerful. For this photo project, I have tried to draw from my fascination with Woodman by photographing my subjects, as they very easily become a part of their own environment. With these portraits, I want to create beautiful paintings filled with fluid movement and the vividness of life. In a way, I want them to be like my dry brush strokes filling up an empty canvas.

Shirley James, Goa

Letter of the Month

We believe that the joy of a family photo is in displaying it. To make your special memories stand out, this Letter of the Month wins a special Photo Frame from Red Moments!



“Photography is also a service that needs its remuneration.”

of Rajasthan and showed them from an unconventional point of view. The fact that these are analog photos and have gone through constant experimentation, makes them even more precious.

Oindrilla M, Bengaluru

Respecting Photography

I enjoy freelancing as a photographer, but I can't help but feel disgruntled when I need to chase clients for pending payments, and where I am constantly asked for discounts. While negotiations are fair, blatant underappreciation for my craft is discouraging. It is unfortunate that even today, photography is not viewed as a serious profession and is expected to be done for free with the promise of giving the photographer more exposure. I did read the article that *Better Photography* did a few years ago ('When to Say No to a Client') on how to deal with clients. However, another feature covering the same issue will be greatly appreciated.

Kunal Jindal, Chandigarh

Vishaan's Little World

Recently, I stumbled upon Veronica Taylor's work 'Emalie's Little World' on

BP's website. I found her photographs of her daughter to be so simple, and yet so heartwarming. Taylor's pictures made me see the value of seizing such moments of my child, so that they can be enjoyed several years down the line.

And so, I began making pictures of my 3-year-old son Vihaan, who I can proudly say has become my most favourite subject to photograph. It feels lovely to wake up each day, as he fills it with various opportunities for me to make wonderful pictures of him.

Monali Das, Kolkata

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● Veronica Taylor's interview 'Emalie's Little World', originally appeared in the April 2014 issue of BP. It features a mother's heartwarming photos of her little daughter.



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SnapShots

WHAT'S NEW

Leica M Typ 262

The aluminium body rangefinder features an extra quiet shutter unit. It is very similar to the other M bodies, but does not include a video or a live view shooting feature. A single shot mode allows up to 2fps, while the drive mode allows up to 3fps.



Pentax 645Z IR

The 645Z IR is a 51.4MP infrared medium format camera. It does not have provision for AF and is made infrared sensitive by removing the IR-cut filter that sits in front of the sensor, which can record wavelengths of up to 1100 nanometers. However, the camera is of a limited edition and will be available only to certain institutions, under specific guidelines.

Ricoh Theta S 360 Degree Camera

The camera features two 12MP 1/2.3-inch fish eye lenses, capable of shooting 14MP 360° photographs and videos. It also has 8GB internal memory and offers full HD video at 30fps. The maximum aperture of the twin lens system is f/2.0, thus making it easy for capturing images in low light situations. The camera retails for Rs. 39,995 and can be purchased from www.ricoh.co.in

Panasonic Updates Lumix G Lenses

Panasonic released firmware updates for five Lumix G lenses, adding support for the maker's Dual IS technology. The new firmware is available for the following lenses—Leica DG Macro-Elmarit 45mm f/2.8 Macro ASPH Mega OIS, Lumix G Vario 45–150mm f/4.0–5.6 ASPH Mega OIS, Lumix G Vario HD 12–32mm f/3.5–5.6 Mega OIS, Lumix G Vario 35–100mm f/4.0–5.6 ASPH Mega OIS and Lumix G X Vario PZ 14–42mm f/3.5–5.6 ASPH Power OIS. This update would help in improving image stabilisation.



“ It's just seeing—at least the photography I care about. You either see or you don't see. The rest is academic. Anyone can learn how to develop. It's how you organise what you see into a picture.

ELLIOTT ERWITT (1928)

Magnum photographer Elliott Erwitt is undoubtedly one of the greatest photographers of our times. The legend is known for his mastery over black and white photography and his candid shots of the everyday absurd. He has produced many photo books, which are instant collector's items. In 2002, he was rewarded The Royal Photographic Society's Centenary Medal and Honorary Fellowship for his contribution to the art of photography.

vitality of the human face.

His earliest colleague and veteran fashion journalist Meher Castellino, had this to say about the prolific photographer, "He would ask some of the



He photographed many, but he was photographed by a few.

most interesting and intelligent questions at press conferences. So much so that the celebrities would not know how to answer them. He never pushed himself forward; he was always the polite smiling man and had a good knowledge of the industry."

Chennai Welcomes its First Photo Biennale

Chennai is known for celebrating the performing arts. However, for the first time, the city will be celebrating photography with the Chennai Photo Biennale. The event will bring together photographers from across the globe and provide them with the opportunity to interact with one another and also view the work of their peers.

The biennale, to be held from 27 February–13 March, is jointly organised by the Goethe-Institut and Chennai-based photographer Varun Gupta, under his organisation Travelling Lens. It will feature four major projects namely, *Urban Water*—a two-week workshop on water conservation, where the participants will

put together an installation on urban water; *Surreal by Nature*—a photo exhibit curated by Yannick Cormier, featuring the works of 10 renowned artists, *Delhi Photo Festival*—a curated theme-based show, and *Photo Intervention at the Station*—a contest open to the public, where the participants will have to photograph and submit an image from city, and the best images will be exhibited in public spaces.

Aside from these key projects, the event will also include artist talks by well-known photographers like Pablo Bartholomew and others, symposiums covering topics related to the ethics in the age of Instagram, movie screenings, curated projections and portfolio reviews.



Image Source: www.missmalini.com

WHAT'S NEW

Sigma Water Repellent (WR) Filter

 The filter uses a clear glass ceramic with water and oil repellent coating, thus letting water droplets bounce right off the surface of the filter. It's also easy to wipe away fingerprints. In comparison to the other filters, the WR filter is thinner, weighs lighter and has higher strength. It offers high transmittance and is compatible with all Sigma lenses, and other lenses which accept front filter threads that are 67mm–105mm in diameter. The filter only reflects 0.24 percent of visible light, thereby minimising flare and ghosting.

Lyko's LED Lighting Panels

 Manfrotto's Lykos is a new range of compact LED lighting panels. The Lykos Daylight (5600K) and Lykos Bi-Colour are portable and use surface mounted LEDs that are battery efficient. The lighting panels include a Bluetooth dongle along with consistent colour, flicker-free illumination and an improved working life.

Lytro Desktop 5.0

This editing software lets users make edits to a depth layer in an image as an alternative to applying edits through masks. It allows background replacement without a requirement for a green screen, and region-based selection with a radial tool to make localised exposure and color edits to an isolated zone.

Konica Minolta MGI JETvarnish 3DS

At Pamex 2015 in Mumbai, Konica Minolta unveiled the MGI JETvarnish 3DS with iFoil inline digital foiling module, to help printers expand their services to include new spot UV and 3D tactile varnishing capabilities. It features increased output for flat spot UV jobs and 3D raised effects. With a speed of up to 2300 A3 sheets per hour for flat spot UV coating, the JETvarnish 3DS is a fast machine complementing both offset and digital presses and allowing commercial printers to increase their productivity while boosting their margins.

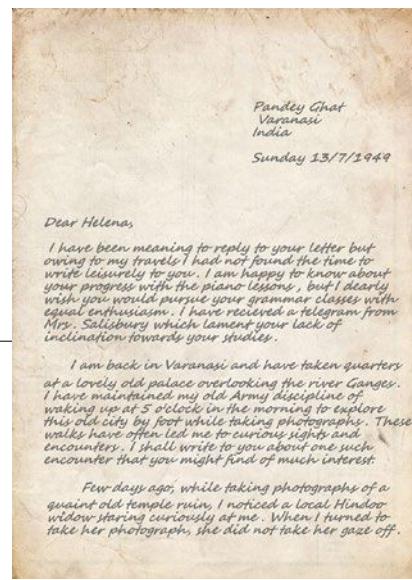
**Shan Bhattacharya Wins the Umrao Singh Sher-Gil Grant**

The Sher-Gil Sundaram Arts Foundation recently announced the winner of their photography grant. Kolkata-based photographer Shan Bhattacharya was the recipient of the 2015 Umrao Singh Sher-Gil Grant for Photography, for his project *Portal*. The grant, amounting to Rs. 5 lakhs, will support his future photography endeavours. Urs Stahel, Founder of Fotomuseum Winterthur, chaired the jury along side Devika Daulet-Singh, Director of PhotoInk Gallery and Jeroo Mulla, Professor and Media Expert.

An ongoing project, Shan's *Portal* is a diaristic version of a fictional narrative. The narration is by this fictional character

who owns a photo studio in Calcutta and comes across this compilation of evidences of an ageless character and decides to pursue it. It goes hand in hand with a series of dated photographs, letters and old negatives, all constructed by Bhattacharya himself. His completed project will be accompanied by considerable amount of text-based material. Shan's aim was to create a sense of deception for his viewers and make his complete project appear as someone else's set of evidences.

Soumya Sankar Bose was the second finalist for his project *Jatra* while Siya Singh Akoi was the third finalist for her series *The Dog Show Project*.

**Major Buyouts in the Photography Industry**

Phase One recently gained complete ownership of Mamiya Digital Imaging (MDI). Since 2009, Phase One held 45% shares of MDI and involved themselves with the development of high-end medium format cameras. The complete acquisition paves way for further control over improvements and new products.

The entire initiative is to expose the public to a wide range of photographic genres, without confining them to one place. The event will also include a series of talks, panel discussions, movie screenings and a special photo marathon for the public.

Jaipur to Host its First Travel Photography Festival

Already known for its brilliant Jaipur Literature Festival, the Pink City will be hosting its first photo festival—Travel Photo Jaipur. It will be held during the first week of February 2016. It is a unique initiative undertaken by the government of Rajasthan to elevate Jaipur's status on the global travel map and expand the city's role as a cultural destination.

Produced by documentary filmmaker Nikhil Padgaonkar, the festival is going to be facilitated by the state's tourism department. It will also showcase innovative and

gripping works of international celebrated photographers like Graciela Iturbide, Mauro Bedoni, Laurent Chehere, Xiao Xiao Hu and Thomas Seelig. The exhibits will be displayed at various public locations, including heritage sites like Hawa Mahal and the Albert Hall Museum.

The event will also include a series of talks, panel discussions, movie screenings and a special photo marathon for the public.

5 November 2015–3 January 2016

Gopakapat Tanam—Exploring Goa's Histories

Museum of Goa

Gopakapat Tanam is a group show featuring the works of Pablo Bartholomew, Alex Fernandes, Pradeep Naik and many more. Artworks that document the history of Goa are included as a part of the show.

11 December 2015–8 January 2016

India 50/50

The Copper House Gallery, Bengaluru India 50/50 is Alejandro Gómez de Túro's travel project and comprises of 50 photographs made over 50 days across the country, in 2010. It shows his process of shooting photographs of spaces and the various places he visited in India.

14 December 2015–12 January 2016

Vintage Photographs by JH Thakker

Bhau Daji Lal Museum, Mumbai



Photographer Jethalal H Thakker set up the Indian Photo Studio after India's Independence in 1947. Known for his dramatic lighting techniques, he was the force behind some of the most iconic photographs of actors like Raj Kapoor, Dev Anand, Nargis, Anwar and Meena Kumari.

PRO TALK

Chiaroscuro was made famous by painters during the Renaissance period. It is a technique which employs a strong contrast between light and dark, and is best used while making studio portraits, where light can be easily manipulated.

NASA Releases New Breathtaking Photo of the Earth

Recently, NASA posted a new high resolution image of the Earth rising over the moon's horizon. This was in remembrance of the famous *Earthrise* image shot by former astronaut William Anders in 1968. The recent photograph was captured by the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) from its orbit around the moon, and was produced by stitching together several images of the earth, since October 2015. The stitching was done by combining the old low resolution coloured photos and the new high resolution black and white images of the earth.

Image Source: www.nasa.gov

Results of Comedy Wildlife Photography Awards 2015

Comedy Wildlife Photography Awards recently announced its winners. The contest gives photographers a chance to submit photographs of animals and their

funny little quirks. The winning images were chosen by a panel of judges ranging from comedians, wildlife TV presenters and photographers to animal experts.

Julian Rad won the first place for his *Rush Hour* photograph of a hamster running full tilt with its puffy cheeks. The second place and third place was awarded to William Richardson and Oliver Dreike, respectively. All three winners received Nikon D750 cameras, while Rad also won a one-week photography safari to Tanzania.



Julian Rad

BOOK REVIEW**Title:** The Photographer's Playbook**Editors:** Jason Fulford and Gregory Halpern**Publisher:** Aperture Foundation**Price:** 24.95 pounds (approx. Rs. 1653)

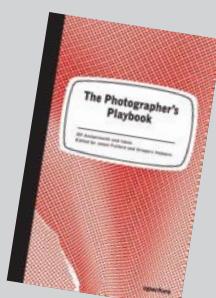
How to Leave the Reader Inspired

Inspiration strikes anywhere. A poem, a short story, a thought... many of our photographic pursuits are shaped by what we experience around us. And there are times when nothing feels right, you don't feel like picking up the camera, or you simply find yourself at a loss for ideas on what images to make.

The Photographer's Playbook is like a goldmine in such situations. It's an anthology of ideas, stories and anecdotes from some of the finest minds in photography. Some of the writings you will read in the book come from legends like Bill Armstrong, Gerry Badger, Roger Ballen, Jessica Ingram and Henri Cartier-Bresson, who has stated, "... you have to try and put your camera between the skin of a person and his shirt, which is not an easy thing."

The book has been carefully edited by Jason Fulford, photographer and co-founder of J&L Books and Gregory Halpern, who has produced photo books like *A, Omaha Sketchbook* and *Harvard Works Because We Do*. The way the writings have been arranged make the reading experience very enlightening. The writings featured in the book are a good mix of simple, complex, unique and downright bizarre. Yet, they don't leave you confused, in fact, they inspire you to go out and start working on a suggested project immediately.

However, this book needs to be enjoyed like fine wine... one glorious sip at a time. Reading through the book in one go is not recommended, as 307 ideas do get lost in translation if read continuously. With that said, *The Photographer's Playbook* should definitely be in the book collection of every photographer, regardless of genre or seniority.



—Written by Supriya Joshi

17 December 2015–30 January 2016

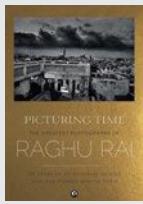
**Conversation
Chambers-Museum
Bhavan**

Kiran Nadar Museum of Art,
New Delhi

Dayanita Singh's exhibition is a collection of her images, which are arranged thematically as nine 'mobile museums' titled File Museum, Museum of Furniture and Little Ladies.

18 December–31 January 2016
Picturing Time

Qjas Art, New Delhi



The exhibition includes 50 outstanding photographs shot by Raghu Rai, spanning over half a century.

26

3 January
Sibylle Bergemann
NGMA Mumbai

German photographer Sibylle Bergemann's exhibition talks revolves around the tense atmosphere in East Germany, during the Cold War. It is exhibited on behalf of the Institute for Foreign and Cultural Relations, and includes images of the reportage, portrait and landscape variety.

PRO TALK

Anti-aliasing Filter or low pass filter is a camera technology that helps reduce distortion that often occurs when photographing patterns.

The New Pirelli Calendar Makes a Dramatic Move

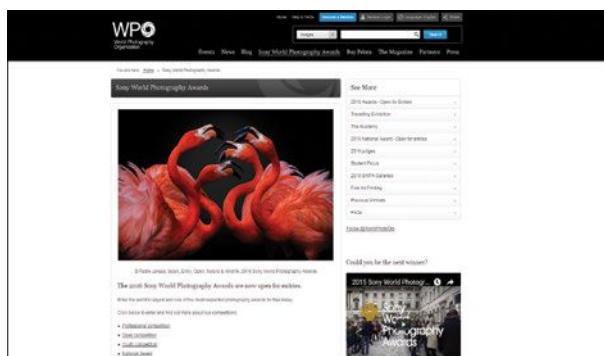
This year, Pirelli Tyres came up with a noteworthy shift in the choice of subjects and aesthetic appeal for their yearly calendar. The company hired renowned photographer Annie Leibovitz, who chose a more organic approach to the subject matter. Instead of making pictures of women from the modeling industry, she decided to create



Annie Leibovitz/Pirelli Calendar

effortless photographs of women of different body types and ethnicities, who are known for their professional, social, cultural, sporting and artistic accomplishments.

Her subjects included Serena Williams, Yao Chen, Patti Smith, Amy Schumer, Yoko Ono and many others. The calendar shows a shift in how women are perceived in the present day.

Call for Entries

Participate in the Sony World Photography Awards and you could win over Rs. 3 lakhs!

Sony World Photography Awards 2016

The Competition: An open category contest that welcomes participation by photographers from all ages, backgrounds and professions.

Categories: Professional, Open, Youth National Awards and Student Focus

Prizes: Prizes worth USD 30,000 (approx.

Rs. 19,15,450) will be given to the winners. Winners will also be presented with the latest Sony digital imaging equipments.

Website: www.alforphotography.com/competition/sony-world-photography-awards-2016

Deadline: 12 January

World Press Photo 2016

The Competition: The contest rewards photographers for the best single exposure photographs and picture stories from the past year of visual journalism.

Categories: Spot News, Sports, People, General News, Contemporary Issues, Daily Life and Long Term Projects (Individual and Group).

Prizes: The winner of the World Press Photo of the Year award will receive 10,000 euros (approx. Rs. 7,19,037).

Website: www.submit.worldpressphoto.org

Deadline: 13 January

Interactions 14th Annual Photo Contest

The Competition: Participants are required to submit their most powerful photographs illustrating innovative, effective, and inspiring efforts in international relief and development.

Prizes: The winner of the contest will receive USD 1000 (approx. Rs. 66,000), and three runners-up will each receive USD 100 (approx. Rs. 6600).

Website: www.interaction.org/photo

Deadline: 15 January

Incredible India Photography Contest

The Competition: Participants have to photograph subjects that portray the incredibleness of India. Images submitted can be from various genres like landscapes, portraits, architecture and still life.

Theme: Incredible India

Prizes: The grand prize winner will be awarded Rs. 25,000, the second prize winner will receive Rs. 15,000 and the third winner will be awarded Rs. 10,000. Also, the best 27 entries will receive Rs. 1000 each.

Website: www.intlarts.org/incredible-india-photography-contest

Deadline: 31 January

Better Photography

Our ever curious and passionate love affair with the camera will never cease. And so be it as Better Photography, India's first magazine completely devoted to the art and science of photography presents an expansive imagery like no other can. It is also the best-selling photography magazine in India and South Asia.

www.betterphotography.in

INDUSTRY VOICE

"There are 500 installations of C70hc in India which is larger than the US market."



Yuji Nakata
Managing Director,
Konica Minolta Business
Solutions India Pvt Ltd

When it comes to the market share in India, we hold approximately 60% of the production printing market. Konica Minolta is a pioneer when it comes to the digital printing press and India has been a growing market for us during the last few years. Interestingly, Konica Minolta digital presses are also used for production

of photo books, apart from other functions.

This year, at the Photo Video Trade Fair in Ahmedabad, we displayed two digital press machines. One was the C70hc, meant for the photo industry and the bizhub c1100/c1085, which is available for commercial use. There are about 400 to 500 installations of C70hc in India which is larger than the US market. Moreover, the printing cost in India is very competitive as compared to the global markets. The engine used in C70hc uses a unique toner technology and the colour gamut is very close to sRGB which makes it suitable for RGB applications. In the next six months, our focus will be on increasing the utility of existing installations in India, like spot UV, jet varnish and foil printing with 3 to 300 microns of variation.

— As told to Shridhar Kunte

CEIF 2016 All Geared to Begin this Month

The All India Photographic Trade and Industry Association (AIPTIA) is organising their Consumer Electronic Imaging Fair (CEIF) 2016 in Mumbai. Previously called Photofair, CEIF is a major annual event, held every alternate year in Delhi as well. It is being organised at the Bombay Exhibition Centre and will take place from 7-10 January 2016.

This is the third largest electronic imaging show which attracts visitors from all over the world. CEIF comprises of over 250 exhibitors of this industry from all over India. Participants include multinational companies, various photo studios and photo academies who display their latest digital cameras, video cameras, photo printers, studio lighting gear, photobooks and more. The photographers, who are also a part of this event, exhibit their work as well.



Along with the exhibitions, AIPTIA will also conduct workshops and fashion shows for the members and the visitors. The committee, in order to promote photography as a hobby, will also display images in various photo galleries. For the benefit of the industry, AIPTIA also offers a lifetime membership to all those who are interested in the field of photography.

Will the New *Star Wars* Installment Awaken Kodak?

After filing for bankruptcy protection in 2012, Eastman Kodak Co might be on its way to making profits for the fiscal year 2016, thanks to the commitment from several Hollywood filmmakers and studios



Image Source: www.ew.com

to use film manufactured by the company in their movies.

One such promise was made and fulfilled by JJ Abrams for the most awaited *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* movie. He filmed the entire movie on the 65mm Kodak film instead of a cheaper digital format. Episode VIII in the *Star Wars* series is also expected to be shot on film.

"We've had a lot of success with people coming back to film, mainly because of the aesthetics of it," said Andrew Evenski, President and General Manager of Kodak's entertainment and commercial films division.

Will the force be strong with Kodak? Only time will tell.

Old Monk Hosts Art Residency in Goa

The Old Monk Art Residency, organised by photographer and lecturer Amit Sheokand, is an all year art program that allows free living and working space to (preferably) visual artists, for up to a month in Goa. The residency includes a free living space, a studio space and a fully equipped kitchen, to name a few. Artists can also donate their work at the end of the residency. Interested candidates can email their work to theoldmonkair@gmail.com.

Better Photography

www.betterphotography.in

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Frame your stories better.

Better Photography is now online.

India's foremost magazine on photography is now at your fingertips. A world of comprehensive information, photography contests, cutting-edge technology, photographer showcases and tips, tricks and techniques of the art of making pictures await you. Welcome to a whole new digital platform to help you capture the world better than ever. Welcome to betterphotography.in

Log on: www.betterphotography.in

**Better
Photography**

GearGuide

HOW WE TEST

Product Categorisation

We first segregate products into categories for the purpose of equitability in testing. The DSLR is divided into entry-level, semi-professional and professional categories. For compacts, we distinguish between advanced and basic compact cameras. Similarly, we also test consumer and pro lenses, flashguns, printers, and other photographic accessories and gear.

The Process

We primarily test for features, performance, build, ergonomics, warranty and support. While this remains constant, the weightage we give to these parameters differs from category to category, because different types of consumers have diverse expectations from products.

Final Ratings

Under each main parameter, we list out hundreds of individual variables (for eg. colour accuracy for individual colours in different lighting, individual features, dynamic range, center-to-edge definition, light falloff, etc) against which we either give points or simply mark 'yes' or 'no'. Thus, we arrive at a score for that parameter, and then, the final score, denoted as a percentage. Additionally, based on the current pricing of a product, a star rating for 'Value for Money' is considered. Value for Money does not affect the final percentage, because prices for products change constantly.

Our Seals of Approval

Any product that scores 80% or higher in individual tests gets 'BP Recommended'—a seal of approval from our team.

Top 30 Cameras

At the end of the calendar year, we evaluate the Indian market and choose what we think are the 30 best cameras, across price ranges. This is Better Photography's recognition of the very best products launched over the course of the year. Our list becomes an interesting reflection of how the camera market is constantly growing and evolving.



Canon PowerShot G5 X

The Force Awakens

The scene is set for an epic battle. Canon's PowerShot G5 X threatens to defeat the empire that Sony's RX100 series rules. Natasha Desai fires up her light saber and sets out to settle the dispute.

Over four years ago, Sony released the Death Star equivalent in compact cameras, causing much shock and awe. With the RX100, they managed to put in a 1-inch sensor in a camera body that fit inside the pocket of your jeans. Sony released four subsequent versions of the camera and for the longest time, the RX100 series remained unchallenged in the advanced compact segment until two years later when Canon and Panasonic entered the game. Canon's G7 X offered a longer focal length and better price than the reigning RX100 III at the time, but, fell short with sluggish AF and no EVF.

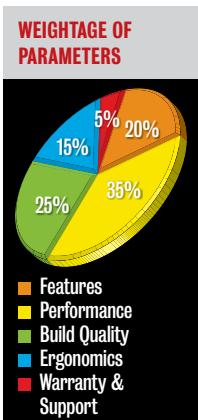
This year, Canon's latest champion is the G5 X, which takes the innards of the G7 X and places it in a slightly bigger, sturdier body with improvements.

Will the G5 X cause a disturbance? I was eager to find out, because the force is strong with this one.

Features

Housed in a sturdy body, the G5 X has a 1-inch 20.2MP BSI CMOS sensor, a f/1.8-f/2.8 lens and manual control over focus and shooting, along with a 3-stop ND filter and ISO speeds of up to 12,800, much like the RX100 III.

The G5 X takes things further with its 24-100mm lens, offering a 30mm advantage over its competitor, a hot shoe, a better resolution 2,360,000 dot Electronic Viewfinder and a fully articulated, 270° tilt and swivel, 3-inch 1,040,000 dots, touchscreen LCD. The RX100 III's LCD only tilted upwards and was not touchscreen capable. It manages a 6.4fps when shooting JPEGs and without AF which is low ▶



TEST

Panasonic LUMIX FZ300

Fantastic detail with a portrait focal length

38



TEST

Nikkor 24mm f/1.8

Disappointing for its price point

44



TEST

Zeiss Milvus 21mm f/2.8

The best small-sized flashgun you can find?

50



compared to the 10fps of the RX100 III. With RAW, the camera manages a meagre 2fps and 0.8fps with RAW + Superfine JPEG.

The G5 X also includes a microphone input, which the RX100 III lacks. Video capabilities include full HD video at 60p and 30p and NTSC and PAL outputs but still doesn't compare to the AVCHD, XAVC S encoding of the RX100 III and IV. And sadly, still no 4k recording included. Although as a casual user of video, the advanced encoding is something I would not be upset about. A serious video enthusiast, would go the extra mile and invest in the RX100 IV, which is a video powerhouse.

Handling

One of the most appealing things about the G5 X and the RX100 series was the pocketability factor. In this aspect, the G5 X, like Yoda, is forced to say "Size matters not... judge me by my size, do you?" The inclusion of the EVF and the hotshoe have resulted in it having a hump-like formation on the top of the camera body. The flash is nestled here as well, making the G5 X much bulkier

than the G7 X. It is definitely not something you can carry around in your pocket, but weighing at 377g, it is still small and not much of a hindrance to carry around in a bag or coat/jacket pockets. Actually, the body of the G5 X is more like the original G series while the sleeker G7 X was actually like the Canon S series. Which, in an Inceptionesque turn was the design influence for the RX100 series.

With the thumbpad and handgrip on the right of the camera body, the G5 X definitely has a better grip than the RX100. Within the *Better Photography* team, we seem to be evenly split between whether a camera should 'feel' like a solid camera or whether pocketability is more important.

Including the front dial, the G5 X allows you to customise two dials, the control ring, the video record and the AF point selection button. Interestingly, each shooting mode allows you to assign the function as you desire. The dials and buttons are located quite comfortably, although someone with larger fingers may have a slightly tough time navigating. While the control ring is

ALSO LOOK FOR

- Sony RX100 III
- Panasonic LUMIX LX100

● **I was very pleased with the way the camera rendered the colours.**
Exposure: 1/250sec at f/2 (ISO 1600)

WHAT'S IN THE BOX

- G5 X
- Battery
- Battery charger
- Micro USB cable
- Neck Strap
- Hot shoe cap





PLUS

- High-res EVF
- Vari-angle LCD
- Focal length range
- Portability
- Hot shoe
- Customisable dials

MINUS

- Battery life
- Not pocketable

34

comfortably placed, it is the clicking kind, which I personally did not enjoy when I had assigned it for Manual Focus. A smoother control ring would definitely have been better, but when assigned as an aperture ring, it makes sense.

The camera has a flash that you manually have to raise instead of a pop-up flash. This can get a little tedious at times, but then again, it has eliminated yet another button from the controls.

Performance

When we tested both the G3 X and the G7 X, we were quite pleased with the image

quality. The findings stand for the G5 X too. RAW files produced good results, with plenty of retrievable details in the highlights and shadows. The JPEG engine too fared well, but it suffered in low light where details became a little smudged. Flare and purple fringing are controlled exceptionally well and the G5 X has a pleasing dynamic range.

AF performance is admirable in bright light, decently good in low light. The face detection mode can get a little fooled sometimes with the focus going on the background instead of the subject. However, for general shooting, the AF overall performs fine and is a huge

Even with the strong backlight of the sun coming into the frame, you can see how well the camera has controlled flare.

Exposure: 1/50sec at f/8 (ISO 320)

ERGONOMICS

Front



The front input dial is easy to access with just your fingers when shooting. The control dial is a clicking kind and easy to operate as well. The AF assist lamp can be turned off if necessary.

Top



Unlike the G7 X, the flash has been placed in the centre of the camera body and needs to be manually raised. The shutter release button is surrounded by the zoom dial, which is customisable as well.

Rear



The LCD is a tilt-and-swivel touchscreen and is very responsive. The buttons are well placed and the thumb grip is excellent and overall grip and feel of the camera is sturdy and good to shoot with.

SPECIFICATIONS

Model name	Canon PowerShot G5 X
MRP	Rs 49,995
Effective pixels	20.2 MP, 5472 x 3648 pixels
Sensor size, type	1-inch, CMOS sensor
Processor	DIGIC 6
Lens	24–100mm (35mm equivalent)
Exposure Modes	Custom, Manual, Aperture Priority, Shutter Priority, Program, Hybrid Auto, Auto, Creative Shot, SCN, Movie
Focussing Modes	Continuous AF, Servo AF, Manual Focus, 1-point, Face+ Tracking, Touchscreen AF
AF Points	31-point AF
Scene Modes	15 different modes
Continuous Shooting	5.9fps
Metering	Evaluative, Center-weighted average, Spot
Shutterspeed Range	Bulb–1/2000sec
Exp. Compensation	+/- 3 EV, at 1/3 stops
Colour space	sRGB
ISO	Auto, 100–12800
White Balance	7 Auto pesets, 2 Custom
Built-in flash	Yes
External flash	Hot-shoe, no bundled flash
LCD size, dots	3-inch articulated, 1,040,000
Viewfinder	Yes, Electronic View Finder
File Formats	JPEG, RAW
Image Stabilisation	Optical
Video resolutions	1920x1080, 1280x720, 640x480
Battery	Battery pack NB-13L Lithium-ion
Dimensions	112 x 76 x 44mm
Weight	377g
Storage Types	SD/SDHC/SDXC
Environmentally sealed	No
Other Features	Live View, Self-timer, Wifi, NFC, Remote control via smartphone, Control ring



improvement over the G7 X. The lens performs well at both the wide and telephoto end and centre sharpness is excellent throughout. Corner sharpness does suffer at the wide end from apertures f/4–f/5.6 but is better at f/8 and f/11.

We found no such problems at the telephoto end where centre to corner sharpness was excellent. Shooting at f/8 at the telephoto end will result in some detail loss due to defraction but at an acceptable level.

Much like other 1-inch cameras in the G Series, the G5 X has a disappointing battery life, allowing around 210–220 shots in one cycle. It does come with an Eco Mode which lets you shoot up to 320 shots but the RX100 III does offer 300 shots in one go. But, it does not have a bundled charger like the G5 X, unless it is bought additionally.

Conclusion

At Rs. 49,995, the G5 X has direct competition from the Sony RX 100 III, priced at Rs. 54,990. Panasonic's LX100 comes in the same price range with a Micro Four Thirds sensor, but, is unavailable in India. The G5 X is portable, offers good picture quality with a longer focal length, an excellent EVF and LCD not to mention a hot shoe and a dedicated charger, making it much more value for money than the RX100 III. That is unless you really need the pocketability. Thus, I conclude by saying in my best Yoda voice, 'buy this camera, you definitely should.'

Noise Test



Details remain good until ISO 1600 after which grain starts creeping in. Images are very usable at ISO 3200 and are acceptable at 6400. ISO 12,800, however, is very grainy and details are smudged.

FINAL RATINGS

Features	18/20
1-inch sensor, portable body, stellar EVF and LCD, 24–100mm focal length, Wifi and NFC	
Performance	31/35
Good image quality and low light performance	
Build Quality	23/25
Sturdy and easy to shoot with	
Ergonomics	13/15
Thumb pad and good hand grip support	
Warranty & Support	4/5
One-year warranty, limited service centers	

OVERALL 89%

Who should buy it? Serious enthusiasts specialising in street photography and general use.

Why? It is an advanced compact, giving the user enough control, all the while remaining pocketable, providing good image quality at a competitive price point for its category.

Value for Money ★★★★☆



Panasonic LUMIX DMC-FZ300

The Legacy Continues

With the inclusion of 4k, Panasonic has upped the ante with the LUMIX DMC-FZ300. Conchita Fernandes finds out what else the camera has to offer.

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Back in 2012, when Panasonic released the LUMIX FZ200, it sent the camera world into frenzy. With a constant f/2.8 aperture across its 25–600mm focal length, it was the camera that ruled the superzoom category. This year, the company has released a new successor in the form of the FZ300. I was excited to see what it had in store this time around.

Features

In its latest iteration, Panasonic has included a 1/2.3-inch 12MP BSI CMOS sensor (also present in the FZ200), along with the latest Venus Engine image processor, thus resulting in an increase in the ISO value to 6400. It also features a new 3-inch 1.04M tilt and swivel touchscreen, and an improved OLED EVF with a 2.36M dot viewing and an increase in magnification to 0.7x.

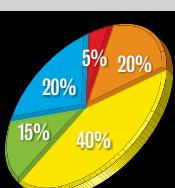
But the real pièce de résistance of the FZ300 is its 4k video and stills feature. You can record 4k video at 30fps and 24fps with full-time AF, manual controls, zebra stripes, 'cinelike' gamma, all at a bit rate of 100Mbps. You can also shoot 4k in four different exposure modes—Program AE, Aperture Priority, Shutter Priority and

Manual Exposure. Users can grab 8MP stills from the video footage too, a feature you will only find in high-end video cameras and in the higher priced Sony cameras like the Alpha 7R Mark II. That's not all. You can also shoot 4k stills in three different modes—4k Burst, 4k Start/Stop and 4k Pre-burst.

The 4k Burst and the 4k Start/Stop mode lets you shoot stills at 30fps. Both let you record images continuously for almost 30 minutes. However, in the 4k Pre-burst, the camera shoots stills (30fps) one second before and one second after you press the shutter. After recording the images, the camera presents the photographs in the form of a camera roll. You can then scroll forward or backward and select the image you want. Out of these two modes, I liked the burst and the pre-burst options the best. The 4k Burst is a good option to use when you know what your subject is going to do next, while the 4k Pre-burst is great if you are unsure about your subject's next move.

The FZ300 also features a 5-axis Hybrid OIS system, only when shooting 1080p video or one of a lesser resolution, and a 2-axis stabilisation for stills. The camera can capture 12fps with single AF and 6fps in continuous AF too.

WEIGHTAGE OF PARAMETERS



- Features
- Performance
- Build Quality
- Ergonomics
- Warranty & Support

Additionally, at the side of the lens is a button which lets you select between the AF Macro and Macro Zoom option. The former lets you shoot the subject from as close as 1cm from the lens, by rotating the zoom lever upmost to wide. The latter lets you shoot from the same distance, but uses 3x digital zoom to further enlarge the subject. Although the file size is not affected, there is a visible decline in quality in the latter. There is also a customisable rotating dial above the AF button to control shutter speed and aperture, or to focus when you select the AF or MF option.

The FZ300 lets you shoot RAW in all the modes, even in the Intelligent Auto mode, which wasn't previously available in the FZ200. The camera is also capable of releasing the mechanical shutter at maximum 1/4000 sec at the wide end, 1/3200 sec at telephoto end and at 1/16000

• Photographs shot on the wide end of the camera, such as this one, are quite sharp, even at the corners.
Exposure: 1/200sec at f/4 (ISO 800)

with the electronic shutter. Other features include focus peaking, hot shoe, an external flash, WiFi with no NFC, and does slow motion video recording at 120fps at 1280x720 pixels.

Handling

In terms of design, the FZ300 is weathersealed and features a deeper right grip, thus giving you a better hold of the camera. There are also four customisable Fn buttons on the camera.

Just like its predecessor, the FZ300's 24x zoom can be controlled by using the zoom rocker on the top right side of the camera and the lever present on the lens barrel. While I was testing both, I noticed that after zooming into the subject using the zoom rocker, I could also simultaneously zoom out using the lever. This feature is useful when shooting video, especially when you ▶

WHAT'S IN THE BOX

- Camera body
- Battery
- Charger
- USB Cable
- Lens Hood
- Camera Strap
- Software CD
- Lens Cap String





The FZ300's AF system is quick to detect subjects in its field view, thus making it great for street photography.
Exposure: 1/250 sec at f/4 (ISO 800)

40

ALSO LOOK FOR

- Canon PowerShot SX60 HS

ERGONOMICS



The FZ300 has an AF Assist Lamp in the front. The hand grip is also more pronounced. Above the lens is a pop up flash and hot shoe. Also, the off-center placement of the tripod mount on the camera's bottom, restricts access of the battery or card while mounted on a tripod.

want to have a smooth transition while zooming in and out of the subject. Both the zoom options are customisable to allow you to stop at the preset focal length, every time you turn off and turn on the camera.

Where you had to press a button to switch between the camera's EVF and LCD, the EVF on the FZ300 works based on eye sensitivity. Depending on your usage, you can also use the button to disable either. The rubber cup around the EVF was slightly bigger as well, and prevented any light from entering it.

Performance

The JPEG engine in the FZ300 is not on par with the RAW output produced by the camera. The images possessed quite a bit of compression of artefacts. Even the burnt out areas of the photograph seemed more pronounced and spread out in the JPEGs than in the RAW format, thus making it one of the weaker links of the camera.

However, the RAW output of the FZ300 is good. In postprocessing, I was able to recover a decent amount of detail from the ▶



The top of the camera has a mode dial, a dedicated video recording button, two function buttons and a zoom rocker. The internal mic appears on top of the camera in the form of two tiny slits. It also features a rotating dial to change the ISO and exposure.



The back of the camera is filled with various buttons. There are two function buttons, a Playback button, an AF/AE Lock button and a Menu button which lets you access settings like metering, flash modes, WB, aspect ratio and others.

PLUS

- Sharp lens
- Long zoom
- Customisable buttons and dials

MINUS

- Noise after ISO 400

SPECIFICATIONS

Model name	Panasonic LUMIX DMC-FZ300
MRP	Rs 45,990
Effective pixels	12.1 MP, 4000x3000 pixels
Sensor size, type	1/2.3-inch, High Sensitivity MOS
Processor	Venus Engine
Lens	25–600mm (35mm equivalent)
Exposure Modes	Intelligent Auto, Program AE, Aperture Priority, Shutter Priority, Manual Exposure, Creative Video, Custom, Panorama Shot, Scene Guide, Creative Control
Focussing Modes	Normal/AF Macro/Macro Zoom, Quick AF, Continuous AF (during video), Eye Sensor AF, Touch AF/AE Function, Touch Shutter, Touch Pad AF, MF Assist, Touch MF Assist
AF Points	49-point AF
Scene Modes	24 different modes
Continuous Shooting	12fps
Metering	Intelligent Multiple, Center Weighted, Spot
Shutterspeed Range	Bulb–1/1600sec
Exp. Compensation	+/- 3 EV, at 1/3 stops
Colour space	sRGB
ISO	Auto, 100–6400
White Balance	5 auto presets, 5 custom
Built-in flash	Yes
External flash	Hot shoe, no bundled flash
LCD size, dots	3-inch articulated, 1,040,000
Viewfinder	Yes, Electronic View Finder
File Formats	JPEG, RAW, DPOF
Image Stabilisation	Optical
Video resolutions	3840x2160 (4k), 1920x1080 (HD)
Battery	Li-ion Battery Pack 1200mAh
Dimensions, Weight	131.6 x 91.5 x 117.1 mm, 691g
Storage Types	SD/SDHC/SDXC
Environmentally sealed	Yes

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This image was shot at the telephoto end, after locking focus on the subject. The amount of detail retained by the camera's lens is quite spectacular. Exposure: 1/500 sec at f/5 (ISO 400)



Noise Test



highlights and shadows. Also, the images produced from the wide end of the lens is very sharp. Although there is a slight softness on the corners of the photograph, it does not take away from the overall quality of it. The same can be said for the camera's performance on the telephoto end as well. Also, despite the nano coating of the lens, the images had flare and in some cases, there was purple fringing too.

Coming to the ISO performance, the FZ300 produces usable images at up to ISO 2000, despite the presence of quite a bit of luminance and colour noise. However, this can be taken care of in postprocessing but up to a certain extent. The AF system too, did an overall good job in establishing focus, despite a few instances where it was a little slow when zoomed to the telephoto end.

Conclusion

Constant aperture, 4k video and photo modes make the FZ300 an exciting proposition. However, if you are not a 4k enthusiast and would rather go for more zoom, the Canon PowerShot SX60 HS (does not have f/2.8 constant aperture, but is cheaper) is a good option. But if you are worried about the limitations of the sensor size and find yourself shooting a lot in low light conditions, then the FZ1000 with the 1-inch sensor is the camera you should go for. Then again, the FZ300 is a good and affordable purchase as it gives you a good enough zoom, 4k video and a constant aperture, all at an affordable price of Rs. 45,990. **EP**

From ISO 100–800, the images produce punchy colours with enough of detail. While ISO 1600 is usable in most cases, the 800–1600 range shows quite a bit of luminance noise and colour noise as well. ISO 3200 and beyond is where the usability of the image decreases.

FINAL RATINGS

Features	18/20
f/2.8 across focal lengths, optical IS, a tilt and swivel LCD, 4K video, sharp lens, EVF, flash, WiFi, hot shoe	
Performance	36/40
Good AF, along with good low light performance	
Build Quality	13/15
Aluminium body with weathersealing	
Ergonomics	18/20
LCD with touchscreen, deep right grip on camera, easy to access and customisable function buttons and dials	
Warranty & Support	3/5
One year warranty, limited service network	

OVERALL 88%

Who should buy it? Anyone who is interested in 4k video recording and would also benefit from the camera's 4k stills feature, the FZ300 is a great option.

Why? For its price, it gives you the best of both worlds (video and still). Also, you will not find a constant f/2.8 aperture at 600mm in any system for this price.

Value for Money

All photographs by Conchita Fernandes



Nikkor AF-S 24mm f/1.8G ED

The Best of the f/1.8s

Raj Lalwani tests the Nikkor AF-S 24mm f/1.8G ED and comes away, extremely impressed by its price-to-performance ratio.

The old 24mm f/2.8 AF-D was no slouch, but its limitations seem glaring on high-resolution bodies, a common scenario that has led to the development of all the recent Nikkor f/1.8 primes, including the new AF-S 24mm f/1.8G ED.

Features

It's interesting to ponder over why one would need f/1.8 in a lens of this focal length, considering that landscape photographers would largely use f/8 or f/11. Environmental portraits take on fascinating dimensions, when made up close at 24mm, but with the background blurred. The excellent close-focusing distance of 0.23m particularly makes the use of f/1.8 interesting.

Handling

In comparison to the old f/2.8 lens, this is actually quite a large lens. That said, it weighs only 355g, courtesy a rather liberal use of plastic in its construction. Along with the (relatively) lightweight D750, it's one of the most exciting accompaniments, especially when walking the streets for long

hours. The Sigma 24mm f/1.4 Art, one of its prime competitors, is way heavier, with a metal construction (and of course, the faster aperture lending to the bulk). That said, I wouldn't be too worried about the plastic... the Nikkor 24mm f/1.8G has a rubberised gasket that weatherseals the mount, something that the Sigma Art lenses omit.

The focus ring barely has to move around 50° to cover the entire focus range. I presume this has been done to speed up AF, but for a lens of this focal length, I would have appreciated some more throw for the use of precise manual focus. There is a distance scale, but again, I would have hoped for more detailed markings than merely f/16.

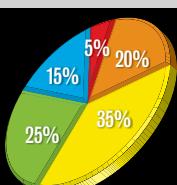
PLUS

- Lightweight
- Very sharp
- Excellent control over flare

MINUS

- Distance scale not very detailed

WEIGHTAGE OF PARAMETERS



- Features
- Performance
- Build Quality
- Ergonomics
- Warranty & Support

SPECIFICATIONS

Model name	Nikkor AF-S 24mm f/1.8G ED
MRP	Rs. 53,950
Lens construction	12 elements in 9 groups
Closest focusing distance	0.23m
Max. Magnification	1:5
Diaphragm blades	7
Max. Aperture	1.8
Dimensions, Weight	77.5 x 83mm, 355g



Raj Lalwani

Performance

Personally, this was a lens that I took a while getting used to, having largely shot at 35mm over the past several months. I need to get closer, I would keep thinking, but I need to avoid distortion; only to realise, after a few dedicated shooting sessions, that my rustiness was unfounded. The 24mm has exceptional control over distortion, whatever little is visible is correctible without any resulting waviness. This encourages you to get closer, which not only does justice to the focal length but also shows you the kind of depth isolation that the lens is capable of.

It was when I made a series of portraits in a local train, that I started appreciating the other qualities of the lens. Autofocus is extremely quick on the D750, and some careful switching between Single Point AF and Group AF was all I needed to do, to focus accurately on my friend Teena, as she stood in the middle of a typically chaotic, crowded bogie.

Top angle f/1.8 portraits, with the handlebars blurred in the extreme foreground, showed me how good the bokeh is. A lot of people only bother about the extent of background blur. In reality, non-distracting foreground blur allows us to

shoot through objects, which dramatically improves our compositional options.

The sharpness is excellent in the centre at f/1.8, and almost matches the similarly priced Sigma 24mm f/1.4 Art. The corners, on the other hand, while not perfect, are better than the Sigma's. Ironically, both these lenses overshadow the Nikkor 24mm f/1.4, which is almost three times the price of this new f/1.8 lens. The sweet spot on the D750 is f/8. Beyond this, diffraction reduces the sharpness slightly, but it's still in acceptable limits.

Fringing is largely controlled, though there is some spherical aberration visible in the out-of-focus areas. Flare control is fantastic, and better than all the other f/1.8 primes that Nikon has released lately.

Conclusion

At a price of Rs. 53,950, the Nikkor 24mm f/1.8G ED is a fantastic bargain, considering its quality eclipses and virtually devalues the company's far more expensive 24mm f/1.4G. It's interesting that the Sigma is only around Rs. 10,000 more. Both lenses are neck to neck. The Sigma offers f/1.4, but the Nikkor matches it optically, in a lighter package. Which one you choose really depends on the kind of photography you wish to do. **EP**

➲ Lenses, for a lot of practitioners, are not so much about resolution charts, but the look they produce, which the 24mm's microcontrast does an excellent job of.
Exposure: 1/160sec at f/1.8 (ISO 1250)

FINAL RATINGS

Features	16/20
f/1.8, Nano Crystal coating	
Performance	33/35
Excellent AF, good microcontrast, smooth, pleasing bokeh, great control over flare	
Build Quality	23/25
Sturdy plastic barrel, rubber weathersealing gasket at the rear mount	
Ergonomics	13/15
DOF markings only for f/1.6	
Warranty & Support	4/5
Two year warranty, wide service network	

OVERALL 89%

Who should buy it? Documentary, landscape and travel photographers who wish to travel light.

Why? The 24mm is the finest of the various f/1.8 primes released by the company in the past few years.

Value for Money ★★★★☆



Sigma 20mm f/1.4 DG HSM Art

Bright-eyed, Very Wide

48

The Sigma 20mm f/1.4 DG HSM Art is the world's brightest 20mm lens. Raj Lalwani puts it on the test bench to see if the advantages of this unique design outweigh its quirks and compromises.

The world's first f/1.4 20mm optic is in line with Sigma's reputation of innovation in paths where others have not treaded.

Right from manufacturing the widest full frame zoom, to making the fastest zoom lenses for both DX and FX, the company has been at the forefront of design breakthroughs that tend to make a lens unique, even before one analyses and evaluates it on the test bench.

Features

Sigma says they have made use of advanced large-diameter aspherical lens manufacturing technology to design this lens, also minimising distortion, transverse chromatic aberration, sagittal coma flare and vignetting. Ordinarily, a 9-bladed diaphragm may not have seemed important in a 20mm lens, but considering its aperture, one can actually blur out the background quite effectively, if you go really up close!

Handling

There is a substantial amount of metal that has gone into this robust construction, but

it's disappointing to see another Art series lens that is not weathersealed. Even the plastic-body, much lighter Nikkor 20mm f/1.8 has partial weathersealing, with a rubberised gasket around the mount that the Sigma omits. That said, it's interesting to note that the lens has been constructed using Thermally Stable Composite material for greater precision in wide temperature variations.

Owing to the lens' bulbous front element, one cannot use filters, which is a serious drawback. In the future, one may be able to use third-party solutions like the ones created for the Nikkor 14–24mm (which has a similar front

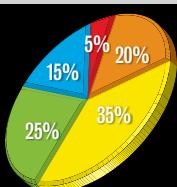
PLUS

- f/1.4 with 20mm
- Excellent optics
- Price

MINUS

- No weathersealing
- Does not support the use of filters

WEIGHTAGE OF PARAMETERS



- Features
- Performance
- Build Quality
- Ergonomics
- Warranty & Support

SPECIFICATIONS

Model name	Sigma 20mm f/1.4 DG HSM Art
MRP	Rs. 73,000
Lens construction	15 elements in 11 groups
Closest focusing distance	0.276m
Max. Magnification	1:7.1
Diaphragm blades	9
Dimensions, Weight	90.7 x 129.8mm, 950g



Raj Lalwani

element), but these contraptions are bulky and expensive.

Manual focus users may find the rotation required for the focusing ring to go from minimum focusing distance to infinity a little short. While that is still quite workable, I was disappointed to see distance markings only for f/8 and f/16. Zeiss tends to spoil us, perhaps.

Most crucially, the company touts this lens as a serious astrophotography tool, but the lack of an infinity hard stop seems a little contradictory.

Performance

The Sigma's resolving power, wide open, at the centre, is outstanding. It is almost as sharp as the new 21mm optics by Zeiss, and that's despite being a stop (versus the Milvus) or two (versus the Loxia) faster. Corners are a little smeared, but if you are shooting at f/1.4 on a 20mm lens, your subject is not going to be anywhere near the corners.

Stop down to f/4 and f/5.6 and the lens is near flawless, with edge-to-edge crispness. Chromatic aberration is well controlled. The built-in lens hood does a good job in keeping stray light away. The control over vignetting is admirable, considering that

this has been the Achilles heel of some of the other Sigma Art optics.

On the Canon 6D, the autofocus is relatively quick. One can expect it to be faster, of course, on other bodies like the Canon 5D Mark III, 5DS R, 1D X or the Nikon D750, D810, D4S.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the Sigma 20mm f/1.4 Art is an astonishing piece of optics. Unfortunately, it alienates a chunk of its otherwise potential audience because of its inability to use filters. So if you are a landscape photographer, or shoot a lot of daytime video that necessitates ND filters, you may want to look at the Nikkor 20mm f/1.8G and the Zeiss Milvus 21mm f/2.8. The Milvus, also tested in this issue, is a different beast, and is a clear winner in terms of build quality and on-field handling.

But low light shooters would crave AF, and thus remain two significant reasons to buy the Sigma 20mm f/1.4 Art. One, if you really need that extra two-thirds stop over the Nikkor 20mm f/1.8... wedding photographers may look at this keenly. Two, if you can forgo filters in order to use the pinnacle of ultrawide optics amongst autofocus lenses. **BP**

• The 20mm exhibits excellent control over distortion, and holds its quality well despite diffraction after f/11. Exposure: 1/50sec at f/16 (ISO 800)

FINAL RATINGS

Features

World's fastest 20mm, compatible with USB dock, two FLD elements, five SLD elements

19/20

Performance

Excellent centre-to-edge sharpness, good control over flare, very minimal distortion

34/35

Build Quality

Sturdy barrel, no weathersealing

23/25

Ergonomics

Small focus throw, smooth, damped focus ring, inability to use filters

12/15

Warranty & Support

Two-year warranty with service centres in major metropolitan cities

3/5

OVERALL 91%

Who should buy it? Architectural photographers and ultrawide shooters who do a lot of low light work.

Why? Landscape photographers, steer away, you can't use filters, but other users will appreciate the design and optics.

Value for Money



Zeiss Milvus 21mm f/2.8 Distagon

In a League of its Own

The Zeiss Milvus 2.8/21 is in a category that is suddenly crowded with recently launched options. K Madhavan Pillai finds out if has what it takes to compete with them all.

When I happened to briefly swap lenses with Swapan Parekh (at the Delhi Photo Festival, in a pub, no less), his exclamation on looking through the viewfinder summed up my entire review. "It does not look like a 21. More like a 28, isn't it? Feels good too." There you have it. That's the Milvus 2.8/21, its review, and the verdict.

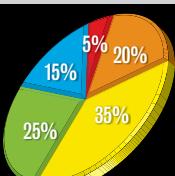
Skirting the upper end of the ultrawide zone, the exaggerated perspective of a 21mm lens a lot of drama, and not subtly at that. This is why control over distortion at these focal lengths have become the holy grail for manufacturers. The Distagon optical design by Zeiss has been extremely effective in this regard. Zeiss proclaims the Milvus 2.8/21 to be 'the best in its class'.

Features

The distinctively designed Milvus lens has a maximum aperture of f/2.8. This is certainly not be the best in its class, but the reason why Zeiss restricted it was to keep the size and weight of the lens down, and to provide a standard of optical quality across the aperture range.

The 2.8/21 has no AF, but it does have a very useful, detailed distance and DOF scale (lacking in almost every AF lens these days), making it quite easy for a user to quickly start with hyperfocal distances. Other significant features include weather and splash resistance, aperture declicking for video, and a 124° of rotation on the MF ring.

WEIGHTAGE OF PARAMETERS



- Features
- Performance
- Build Quality
- Ergonomics
- Warranty & Support

Handling

The all metal lens (including the supplied hood) is easily the best looking wide lens I have come across so far, and it handles the way it looks too. Despite the shape, the 2.8/21 sits nicely in the hand. The MF ring is wonderfully smooth and the best MF experience in a wide. The lens hood fits in with the lines beautifully, and can be reversed for easy storage. The on-board flash throws a shadow with the hood attached, but not otherwise. The lens cap has had a redesign as well, over the previous editions, and is now quite thick, allowing a much better grasp. The lens is not a fisheye, and can take slim filters of a diameter of 82mm.

Performance

When it comes to shooting with extreme wide angle lenses, quality of bokeh and sharpness are less critical factors than distortion, flaring and loss of contrast because of it. Wide open, except for the extreme corners where sharpness drops

PLUS

- Exceptional design
- Detailed markings
- Superb handling
- Optical performance

MINUS

- Soft corners till f/5.6
- No AF

SPECIFICATIONS

Model name	Zeiss Milvus 21mm f/2.8 Distagon
MRP	Rs. 1,19,950
Lens construction	16 elements in 13 groups
Closest focusing distance	0.22m
Max. Magnification	1:5
Diaphragm blades	9
Aperture Range	f/2.8 to f/22
Dimensions, Weight	95.3 x 92.5mm, 735g



K Madhavan Pillai

quite badly, the 2.8/21 does well. At f/4, there is noticeable increase in contrast across the frame, and center to corner sharpness evens out at f/8. The lens starts performing at its best from f/8 to f/16. Control over flare across the aperture range is reasonably good. Distortion is superbly well-controlled, and the very slight fringing against the light is easily correctable.

Conclusion

The Milvus 2.8/21, priced at Rs. 1,19,950, is not without its competitors though. In the past, I was extremely impressed with the 14mm lens (Distagon inspired) of the Sigma DPO Quattro (21mm equivalent on its sensor). Of course, it is a very different sort of product, but the same angle of view.

On test in this issue is also the Sigma 20mm f/1.4 Art (which I have yet to get my hands on). It is a bigger lens, but with two stops of undeniable advantage. With the reputation that the Art series has garnered, it might prove to be the more rational choice.

Nikon has been releasing iterations of its 20mm lens since 1959. At about half the price of the 2.8/21, the recently launched Nikkor 20mm f/1.8G would also be an excellent contender. It does not have the same level of contrast, but both flare and distortion are well controlled, and it is small

and light enough for casual street shooting. It is nowhere close to the build quality of the Milvus though.

24mm lenses come close enough to 21mm to become options too, and here, the Sigma 24mm f/1.4 Art comes through strongly. It would be my preferred lens over both Nikon and Canon's f/1.4 versions (pricing considerations included). The new Nikkor 24mm f/1.8G (also on test this issue) does well too. And, of course, all them have AF.

All of this begs the question, why is the 2.8/21 a choice and for whom? It all comes back to the kind of photographer you are. Firstly, the optical quality of this lens is superb. It can handle any situation you throw at it. Secondly, the Milvus will easily outlast competing lens three times over, making it well worth the price tag. Thirdly, as someone who almost constantly uses hyperfocal distances, the 2.8/21 gave me an enormous amount of freedom by not having to bother about continuously focusing or where my focus point was falling. I was free to concentrate on framing and getting the moment. Finally, as Swapan succinctly puts it, the lens feels and looks good.

If these four reasons seem good enough, and make you stop and consider, I can guarantee that the Milvus 2.8/21 is a very worthy choice indeed. **BP**

① Camera held above the head, this is about 3 feet away from the subjects. I was quite surprised at how natural and tight the frame feels. Exposure: 1/160sec at f/11 (ISO 1600)

FINAL RATINGS

Features

16/20

Aperture declcking for video, superb design

30/35

Soft extreme corners up to f/4. Excellent control over flare and distortion

24/25

All metal, dust and splash resistance

13/15

Feels great in the hand, excellent manual focus, detailed distance and DOF scale

3/5

Warranty & Support

Two-year warranty, limited service facilities in India

OVERALL 86%

Who should buy it? Documentary, street, architecture, or interior photographers with the knowhow about using manual focus well.

Why? This lens is optically excellent. The freedom that MF gives you on a 21mm can be quite liberating, especially with a lens that feels good in the hand too.

Value for Money



Zeiss Milvus 50mm f/2 Makro-Planar

Primed for Specialists

The Zeiss Milvus 2/50M, as it is called, is the the fastest large aperture short macro prime for full frame cameras. As K Madhavan Pillai discovers, this is not all there is to it.

Often, the most difficult to please segments of photographers happen to be those who specialise and opt for gear meant for certain types of photography. The introduction of the Milvus line of six lenses came as a shot in the arm for these technical practitioners. Of the six, two are Makro-Planar, one of them reviewed here. The specialised nature of this lens is emphasised by the fact that the lineup also includes a 50mm f/1.4, with a minimum working focus distance of 12.1 inches.

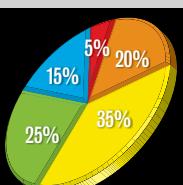
Features

The 2/50M focuses down to 3.93 inches in front of the filter thread, without the lens hood, to deliver a magnification of 1:2 or 0.5x. It is impractical for short macros to move closer than this as the shorter working distance inevitably makes lighting impossibly difficult. In this category of lenses, none offer more than 1:2.

The aperture ring has a range of f/2 to f/22, in half stop clicks. This is a stop wider than competing lenses, and a stop less than equivalent Canons and Nikons, at the minimum end. While minimum apertures usually remain unused because of diffraction related softness, smaller apertures allow greater working DOFs, and can prove useful in certain situations.

The all metal lens is weathersealed and splash resistant, and comes with a reversible metal lens hood for easy storage.

WEIGHTAGE OF PARAMETERS



- Features
- Performance
- Build Quality
- Ergonomics
- Warranty & Support

Handling

There is no other way to say this... it is just such a joy to use an exceptionally well crafted lens. The art of design so that form minutely follows function, so that there is not a wasted line or curve, and yet to make it look and feel fantastic, and to make it durable, is something that Zeiss has mastered with the Milvus lineup. For instance, the distance scale, logos and lettering on the lens barrel is not painted on, but engraved. I could write another 2000 words on the design of this lens alone, but take my word for it, it is quite brilliant.

A few points to mention... 2/50M is compactly built, somewhat heavier than other short macro primes, and perfectly at home on the Nikon D810 which I used to test it. Manual focus is beautifully silky, with just the right resistance and a 303° rotation for perfect control. For video, the aperture ring can be declicked, and the extended focus rotation is a big advantage.

SPECIFICATIONS

Model name	Zeiss Milvus 50mm f/2 Makro-Planar
MRP	Rs. 84,950
Lens construction	8 elements in 6 groups
Closest focusing distance	0.10m (working distance)
Max. magnification	1:2 or 0.5x
Diaphragm blades	9
Aperture range	f/2 to f/22
Dimensions, Weight	80.7mm x 87.7mm, 660g

PLUS

- Exceptionally crafted
- Optical prowess
- Detailed markings
- Superb handling

MINUS

- Issues at f/2 to f/4 at extreme corners
- No AF (not used for serious macro shooting anyway)

Critical Depth

This is the DOF available at the min. focus distance, measured at 100% on the 36MP sensor of the Nikon D810.

f/2	1.2mm
f/2.8	1.7mm
f/4	2.4mm
f/5.6	3.4mm
f/8	4.8mm
f/11	6.6mm
f/16	9.6mm
f/22	13.2mm

f/11 and f/16 mark the sweet spot, where the optical performance is flawless. This also works well for macro users, considering the working DOF.



K Madhavan Pillai

53

Performance

Wide open, centre sharpness is quite good on the Nikon D810, but the extreme corners suffer, along with some coma (most visible in the elliptical shape of pointillistic bokeh, against darker backgrounds). There is also two stops of vignetting. For portraiture, f/2 is a perfectly usable. From f/4, vignetting and coma both disappear. Centre to corner sharpness is nothing short of excellent at both f/5.6 and f/8.

The best performance of this lens occurs at f/11 and f/16, with f/22 very marginally losing contrast to diffraction. For a macro shooter, these happen to be the most important f stops because they afford the best working depths at close distances.

Bokeh is nicely soft-edged and creamy at the larger apertures. This, along with excellent overall control over flare and fringing, make the sharpness pop right out. In short, the lens is a Zeiss and shows it.

Conclusion

At Rs 84,950, (a reasonably good price for Zeiss glass) what you get is a highly refined, beautifully designed, detailed macro lens. Of course, you could consider using the superb Sigma 50mm Art with an extension tube and careful adjustments. Or, for

that matter, any 50mm lens will manage an acceptable job, especially with lower resolution sensors. For a more involved macro photographer, there are options from Nikon and Canon at slightly less than half the price. However, all of these options eventually lack the optical breadth or the handling finesse of the Milvus 2/50M.

Perhaps, the only other lens unique enough to offer a competitive choice would be the Rs. 1,46,600 PC-E Micro Nikkor 45mm f/2.8D ED. This is a perspective control lens with tilt/shift, introduced in 2008, which is quite a different sort of lens altogether. Besides, optics have moved on since then.

Adding AF to the 2/50M would have extended its usability to other situations, but it would also have reduced its functionality for the photographers it is targeted at, especially in its construction, form factor and handling. Rarely, if ever, do exacting macro photographers use AF at extremely close focusing distances.

For studio still life, products, extreme closeups or for portraits... for technically adept photographers who need a short macro, the Milvus 2/50M is an ideal choice. With its one f stop of advantage and stellar performance at narrow apertures, what you have is a rather unique, versatile lens. **EP**

Flare is superbly controlled and the microcontrast allows wonderfully sharp details directly against the light.
Exposure: 1/100sec at f/8 (ISO 64)

FINAL RATINGS

Features

18/20

1:2, f/2, dust and splash resistant, no AF

30/35

Performance

24/25

Very good centre sharpness but extreme corners soft below f/4, f/8 onwards is brilliant

Build Quality

13/15

All metal including lens hood, will last decades

Ergonomics

3/5

Best design and craftsmanship in a macro yet. Silky smooth detailed manual focus

Warranty & Support

Two-year warranty, limited service facilities in India

OVERALL 88%

Who should buy it? Anyone specifically looking for a short macro for technical studio closeups and still life, with studied portraiture as a secondary use.

Why? Getting the best use from this lens requires technical knowhow and the use of process. Its exceptional handling and optical finesse can yield extraordinary results.

Value for Money

Vanguard Havana 41 Backpack

The Very Inconspicuous Companion

There are certain expectations one has from a camera bag when travelling and Natasha Desai investigates whether the Vanguard Havana 41 delivers.

The bag has a provision where it can be put on the handle of your trolley, and secured with the Velcro strip present there.

54

Some of the biggest fears that photographers have when travelling is that theft and/or the damage of photographic gear. Recognising this, Vanguard has come out with the Havana backpack series in a tan colour for different sizes and various photographic gear.

Everything it Held

First off, the bag looks like regular-Joe backpack and not something that was housing a Nikon V1 body, a 10-110mm lens, a 30-100mm lens, a small flash gun, a GoPro Hero 4 and an iPad. It also had travel documents, assorted toiletries, money, a change of clothes and a bottle of water. (It can fit in a couple of lenses and DSLR body in place of the V1 kit.)

The Odds and Ends

This backpack is not for the OCD photographer who needs every part of his gear neatly organised into various compartments as there are not that many present. The bag has a pouch-like compartment on the front that can house loose change, cellphone, wires, a power bank, a lens pen and the likes. On the inside, it has a separated mesh compartment for memory cards and one additional slot. It also has a water bottle compartment that doubles up as a small tripod/monopod holder.

You can access your camera from the front of a bag via a zip which pulls out a padded camera insert with dividers. The padding

• What I really like about the bag was the fact that you can remove the camera insert, and remove the Velcro divider that separates the top compartment from the bottom that houses the gear. This transforms the bag into a regular backpack.



is not the best, but it is adequate. Owing to how this particular compartment has been constructed, it is not the fastest way to reach for your camera. But for a traveller and a very relaxed walk-around-the-city, urban shoot, I found it to be perfect.

What Could Have Been Improved

I would have preferred the rain cover to foldout from the bottom of the bag rather than its current position in the front zip. I would also have liked the bottom of the bag to be a much stiffer, because right now I would be a little worried if the bag happened to slip or was placed a little too firmly on the ground. While I find the padding of the camera insert is adequate, I think a lot of people would find this concerning.

Let me be very clear, this is not a camera bag, it a backpack that can also house gear. What makes this bag ideal for me is the fact that it is light and small, yet is able to fit in up to 5kgs of gear, clothes and other stuff when required. It looks inconspicuous, it looks good, it can double up as a regular backpack and it has a rain cover. Priced at Rs. 7490, this bag has won it for me as a durable around-the-city/travel bag. **EP**

SPECIFICATIONS

- Product Name: Vanguard Havana 41
- MRP: Rs. 7490
- Dimensions: 31 x 22 x 40cm

Product source:

Nikita Distributors
+91-20-30500600
+91-20-30500614

RATING



TOP 30 CAMERAS YOU CAN BUY TODAY!



56

Wish to buy a new camera? Here's our annual list, where we evaluate the Indian market and choose the 30 best cameras, across price ranges.

The camera does not matter. But then again, it does. Contradiction is not our intention, but it's vital for us to remember this, considering how tempting it can be, to invest our energies in looking for our next camera, rather than our next photograph. The best of cameras have made boring, insipid photos, when the photographer has obsessed over gear and pixels, instead of vision and heart.

Yet, there is no denying that the choice of tool influences the way we see. For a discerning photographer, selecting a camera ought to be a careful, deliberate choice, made after balancing practicality, cost, usage and craft.

Iconic Representation of Essential Features

FF	35mm full frame sensor		
APS-C	A sensor that is approx. 23.6 x 15.7mm		
MFT	Micro Four Thirds sensor of approx. 17.3 x 13mm		
Med Form	A Medium Format sensor		
1 inch	1/2.3	1/3.1	Sensor size, mostly found in compact cameras

20 MP	Total effective pixel count of the sensor
RAW	Shoots RAW images, along with JPEGs
10x	Amount of optical zoom in a compact camera
10 fps	Max. shooting speed with continuous AF
IS	Sensor-shift or optical-based stabilization

The omnipresence of the cameraphone, both as a casual chronicler of our daily lives, and as a serious photographic tool, has altered the (conventional) camera market drastically. Our list is an interesting reflection on how manufacturers are trying to tackle this. Sadly, a number of excellent cameras have missed out, because they are either not available in India (Panasonic LX100, Fujifilm X-T10, amongst others) or priced more than one would expect them to be (Fujifilm X100T, for instance). Cameraphones have not been included—their update cycles are way too frequent for an annual list, and nor have specialist tools like the GoPros or the Instax.

4K	1080	1080	Max. video resolution possible (with best possible frame rate)
WS	EWS	Weathersealing/Extreme weathersealing	
WP	Waterproof		
WIFI	In-camera ability to transfer data to smartphones through WiFi		
NFC	Near Field Communication for additional wireless features		

BELOW ₹30,000

Nikon COOLPIX S33

Announced in February 2015

13.2 MP | 1/3.1 inch | 3x | 4.7 fps | ND | 1080 60p | WP

MRP
Rs. 6950

Who Should Buy It? Hobbyists who wish to shoot the monsoon, parents of photo-enthusiast kids and if you attend a lot of pool parties.

Why? Waterproof (33 feet) on a budget!, it doesn't offer much control, but is simple to use. Average sensor, but good lens that gives sharp results in good light.

Nikon COOLPIX S7000

Announced in February 2015

16 MP | 1/2.3 inch | 20x | 9.2 fps | IS | 1080 60i | WiFi | NFC

MRP
Rs. 9950

Best For? Hobbyists, families who travel a lot, social media enthusiasts.

Why? Pocketable 20x zoom has never been this affordable. The 4-axis Hybrid VR makes casually shot footage pleasing, and modes like Short Movie Show and Time-lapse movie not only challenge your creativity, but are great fun for Facebook.

Canon IXUS 275 HS

Announced in February 2015

20.2 MP | 1/2.3 inch | 12x | 2.5 fps | IS | LCD | 1080 60p | WiFi | NFC

MRP
Rs. 9995

Best For? Nature enthusiasts who don't wish to spend much time postprocessing.

Why? The IXUS cameras not only offer some of the most pleasing colours and quality straight out of the camera, they also produce sharp results, both at the telephoto end, and while shooting extreme close-ups.

Nikon COOLPIX P530

Announced in February 2014

16.1 MP | 1/2.3 inch | 42x | 7 fps | IS | EVF | 1080 60i

MRP
Rs. 16,950

Best For? Families going for a safari, amateur wildlife photographers.

Why? 42x zoom at this price point may get your mouth watering, but keep in mind that it's not easy to balance any camera, handheld, at a zoom range beyond 20x. That said, it's an inexpensive way to start learning the vagaries of nature.

Sony Cyber-shot DSC-HX90V

Announced in April 2015

18.2 MP | 1/2.3 inch | 30x | 10 fps | IS | EVF | LCD | 1080 60p | WiFi | NFC

MRP
Rs. 24,990

Best For? Travellers, bloggers, city chroniclers.

Why? The only pocketable superzoom with an EVF, it has manual control and excellent ergonomics, similar to the iconic RX100, including a lens control ring! The only disappointment in this feature-packed camera is the omission of RAW.

Nikon D5200

Announced in November 2012

24.1 MP | APS-C | RAW | 5 fps | OVF | LCD | 1080 60i

MRP
Rs. 28,450
(Body Only)

Best For? First-time DSLR buyers, street shooters, those who need a backup body.

Why? It's a few generations old, but D5200, with its 39-point AF system and excellent sensor is a remarkable deal, right now. Ignore its more expensive, newer siblings, and invest in good glass with the money you save.

Sony Cyber-shot DSC-RX100

Announced in May 2012

20.2 MP | 1in | 3.2x | RAW | 10 fps | IS | 1080 60p



MRP
Rs. 28,990

Best For? Serious practitioners wanting excellent quality in a pocketable body.

Why? With its f/1.8 lens and excellent stabilisation, it is probably a better video tool than an entry-level DSLR with a kit lens! The excellent dynamic range, fine quality at ISO 3200 and discreet, reliable operation make it ideal for travel and street.

₹30,000-₹60,000

Nikon 1 AW1

Announced in February 2014

14.2 MP | 1in | RAW | 15 fps | 1080 60i | WP



MRP
Rs. 39,950
(with 11-27.5mm
kit lens)

Best For? Divers, swimmers, action enthusiasts.

Why? The form factor may restrict it from being the digital Nikonos, but this is still the only interchangeable-lens, large-sensor, RAW-shooting camera that can go underwater, without investing in a dedicated (and expensive) water housing.

Canon PowerShot G5 X

Announced in June 2014

20.2 MP | 1in | RAW | 4.2x | 1.2 fps | IS | ND | 1080 60p | EVF | LCD | TCH | WiFi | NFC



MRP
Rs. 49,995

Best For? DSLR owners who want a small, serious camera.

Why? The G5 X is not pocketable, but the RX100 juggernaut seems to have finally halted. At this price bracket, the G5 X matches the RX100 III's excellent image quality, but offers more zoom and a better EVF!

Canon PowerShot SX60 HS

Announced in September 2014

16MP | 1/2.3 inch | 65x | RAW | 6.4 fps | IS | EVF | LCD | 1080 60p | WiFi | NFC



MRP
Rs. 29,995

Best For? Serious wildlife enthusiasts who are on a tight budget.

Why? More zoom than one would practically need, a hot shoe and RAW capability make this a fine tool in the right hands. Zoom Framing Assist helps locate and reacquire a subject, which is otherwise very difficult, at such extreme focal lengths.

Sony Alpha A6000

Announced in February 2014

24.3 MP | APS-C | RAW | 11fps | EVF | LCD | 1080 60p | WiFi | NFC



MRP
Rs. 40,990
(Body only)

Best For? Street and travel photographers who feel the need to change lenses.

Why? The best budget mirrorless camera, at least, amongst the ones available in India. The sensor is excellent in low light and the AF, quite good by mirrorless standards. Video is fantastic, and for serious shooters, there is also an EVF.

Canon EOS 750D

Announced in February 2015

24.2 MP | APS-C | RAW | 5fps | OVF | LCD | TCH | 1080 30p | WiFi | NFC



MRP
Rs. 49,995
(Body Only)

Best For? Video enthusiasts who want a budget DSLR.

Why? Paired with the right lenses, the 750D is an excellent video DSLR, especially considering how good the AF is, and the sheer ergonomic use of the touchscreen. For stills, it isn't the best sensor around, but is quite a competent camera.

₹50,000-₹90,000

Ricoh GR

Announced in April 2013

16.1 MP | APS-C | RAW | 4fps | ND | 1080p 30p

MRP
Rs. 52,495**Best For?** Street photographers who see the world at around 28mm.**Why?** Even today, the GR is unmatched by other manufacturers (The GR II is out, but the older one is good enough). Optics are outstanding, way sharper than any 28mm equivalent APS-C lens, and ergonomically, Snap Focus works like a dream.**Sony Cyber-shot RX100 IV**

Announced in June 2015

20.2 MP | 1in | RAW | 2.9x | 16fps | IS | 4K 30p | LCD

MRP
Rs. 69,990**Best For?** Video professionals who need the ultimate in slo-mo video.**Why?** From a stills point of view, the RX100 IV does not move the bar much ahead. In terms of video though, not only does it have 4k video and 1080p/120, but also high-quality 240fps... so imagine a much cheaper FS7, in a pocketable form factor!**Nikon D7200**

Announced in March 2015

24.2 MP | APS-C | RAW | 6fps | OVF | 1080p 60p | WS | WiFi | NFC

MRP
Rs. 81,450
(Body Only)**Best For?** Wildlife photographers, a backup body for photojournalists.**Why?** The best APS-C DSLR of the company, it lacks the extreme speed of its Canon counterpart, but is no slouch, inheriting a lot of its features from the D810 and D4S. The D7200 also has a far superior sensor to the Canon.**Panasonic LUMIX DMC-FZ1000**

Announced in June 2014

20.2 MP | 1in | 16x | RAW | 12fps | IS | EVF | LCD | TCH | 4K 30p | WiFi | NFC

MRP
Rs. 58,990**Best For?** Those who want pro-grade 4k video at long zoom ranges.**Why?** A 1-inch sensor, a fast f/2.8-4 lens and 16x zoom make the FZ1000 a very competent superzoom. But with 100Mbps 4k shooting, it surges ahead of the competition. Did you know you can extract a usable 8MP JPEG from the video?!**Sigma dp0/1/2/3 Quattro**

Announced in February 2015

39 MP | APS-C | RAW | 3.5fps

MRP
Rs. 79,900**Best For?** Those who'd sacrifice speed to get incredible resolution.**Why?** Based on the focal length you prefer, you can choose any of these. You are sacrificing a lot, the operation is laborious, but if you are a slow, deliberate photographer, the outstanding optics ensure that matches 40MP DSLRs.**Pentax K-3**

Announced in October 2013

24MP | APS-C | RAW | 8.3fps | IS | OVF | LCD | 1080p 30p | EWS

MRP
Rs. 85,365
(Body Only)**Best For?** Wildlife photographers, extreme-weather photographers.**Why?** The K-3 boasts of probably the best weathersealing you'd see in a DSLR. It doesn't match its Nikon or Canon counterparts in video, but for stills, the K-3 sensor matches the very best, with immense customisation and refined handling.

₹90,000-₹2,00,000

Fujifilm X-T1

Announced in January 2014

16MP APS-C RAW 8fps EVF LCD 1080 60p WiFi EWS

MRP
Rs. 97,000
(Body Only)**Best For?** Street, travel and documentary photography.**Why?** Aside from having the largest EVF in the market, the X-T1 also boasts of remarkable control over noise, a large number of physical switches and dials, and also Fuji's excellent lens lineup!**Canon EOS 7D Mark II**

Announced in September 2014

20MP APS-C RAW 10fps OVF 1080 60p EWS

MRP
Rs. 1,28,795
(Body Only)**Best For?** Sports and wildlife photographers.**Why?** The 7D Mark II has Canon's best APS-C sensor, and though the quality hasn't surpassed its competition, it packs a serious punch in the speed department. Consider this a mini 1D X, and the price doesn't seem too high anymore!**Sony Cyber-shot DSC-RX1R**

Announced in June 2013

24 MP FF RAW 2.5 fps 1080 60p

MRP
Rs. 1,79,990**Best For?** Serious street photographers who want the ultimate in quality.**Why?** An excellent sensor-lens combination makes this the best possible overall quality in the smallest possible package, for those who enjoy the 35mm field of view. There are hidden costs though, the EVF is a must, as are plenty of spare batteries.**Panasonic LUMIX DMC-GH4**

Announced in February 2014

16MP MFT RAW 12fps EVF LCD TCH 4K 30p EWS WiFi NFC

MRP
Rs. 1,11,990
(Body Only)**Best For?** Serious high-end video professionals.**Why?** 4k capability is just part of the story, the camera has some of the finest video functionality, including the ability to record footage at a bit rate of 200Mbps, and shoot Full HD video at 120fps. The reigning video king, along with the Sony A7S II.**Nikon D750**

Announced in September 2014

24MP FF RAW 6.5 fps OVF LCD 1080 60p EWS WiFi

MRP
Rs. 1,34,450
(Body Only)**Best For?** Documentary and wedding photographers.**Why?** The D750 is probably the best all-round camera today, hitting the sweet spot between resolution, low light quality, speed and price. There are a bunch of video features too and the tilting LCD is a bonus, unmatched by any full frame DSLR.**Nikon D810**

Announced in June 2014

36.3 MP FF RAW 5fps OVF 1080 60p EWS

MRP
Rs. 1,99,950
(Body Only)**Best For?** Studio, landscape, portraiture, documentary, nature work.**Why?** Sony and Canon both have higher-res alternatives now, but the D810 holds its own, with fantastic AF and battery life (as compared to the Sony A7R II) and excellent dynamic range and video (as opposed to the Canon 5DS II).

ABOVE ₹2,00,000

Sony Alpha 7S II

Announced in September 2015

12MP FF RAW 2.5fps EVF LCD 4K 30p WS WiFi NFC



MRP
Rs. 2,34,990
(Body Only)

Best For? Wedding cinematographers, documentary filmmakers.

Why? Aside from its 4k capabilities, what's jawdropping about the A7S II is how well its sensor sees in virtual darkness. Video quality at the highest ISO settings is unparalleled and ideal for filming events where the lighting is not in one's control.

Sony Alpha 7R II

Announced in June 2015

42.4MP FF RAW 5fps EVF LCD 4K 30p WS WiFi NFC



MRP
Rs. 2,39,990
(Body Only)

Best For? Commercial photographers who also need high-end 4K video.

Why? This is the only high-resolution camera that has 4k functionality. Aside from that, it adds a bunch of small features that make it the best FE camera till date. Battery life and handling quirks are still serious issues.

Canon EOS 5DS R

Announced in February 2015

50.6MP FF RAW 5fps OVF 1080 30p EWS



MRP
Rs. 2,65,995
(Body Only)

Best For? Those who need the ultimate in resolution within the 35mm format.

Why? The dynamic range is still not as good as the Sony sensors, but in terms of sheer detail, the 5DS R is the best in the world today. Make your lens choices carefully, as very few optics do justice to such a high resolution.

Nikon D4S

Announced in February 2014

16MP FF RAW 11fps OVF 1080 60p EWS



MRP
Rs. 4,19,950
(Body Only)

Best For? Photojournalists and sports photographers, who use Nikkor lenses.

Why? The D4S has a host of small improvements over the D4, which make it the most complete sports/low light DSLR in the market today. One may want to look at its prices a few months later though, as the D5 is expected to be announced soon.

Canon EOS-1D X

Announced in October 2011

18MP FF RAW 12fps OVF 1080 30p EWS



MRP
Rs. 4,55,995
(Body Only)

Best For? Photojournalists and sports photographers, who use Canon glass.

Why? The 1D X is Canon's first full frame high-speed DSLR and runs neck to neck with its Nikon counterpart. We expect its replacement to get announced some time soon though, so you may want to wait for a while before taking a decision.

Pentax 645Z

Announced in April 2014

51MP Med Format RAW 3fps LCD OVF 1080 30p EWS



MRP
Rs. 6,29,695
(Body Only)

Best For? Studio, portraiture, landscape, making large prints.

Why? The Pentax 645Z is, by far, the most affordable medium format system. Sure, DSLRs have hit the 50MP benchmark now, but the detail resolved, microcontrast and dynamic range of medium format is still significantly better.

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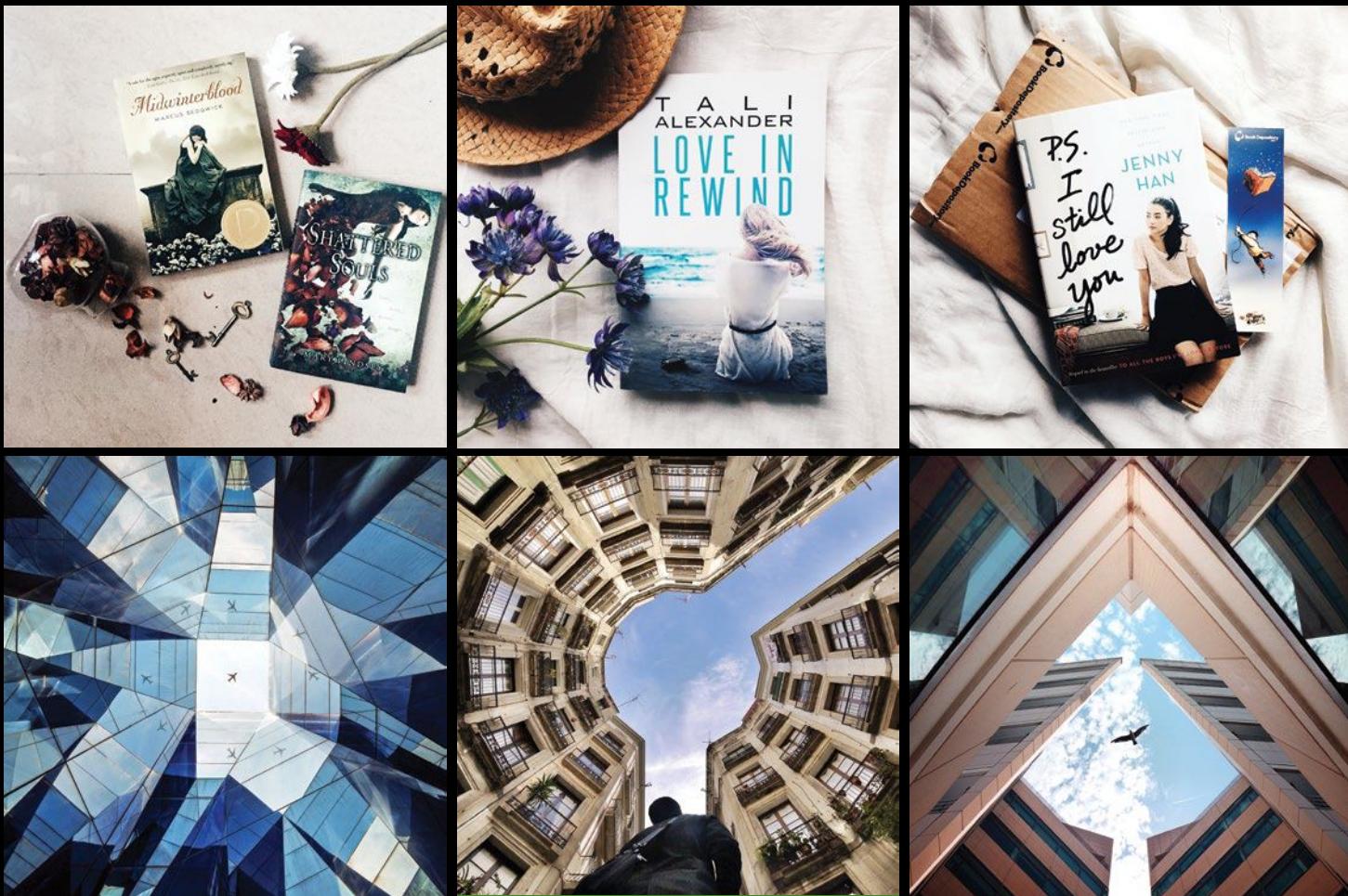
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Better Cellphone Photography



UP FOR A CHALLENGE?

12 photographic assignments to push your creative buttons

- Capturing fantastic sights through an airplane window
- Exclusive: How does the One Plus X fare on our test bench?

Editorial

"There's a lot to learn from the way our parents look at photos. In their simplicity lies the story."



When the Teacher Starts to Learn

Before cellphone photography became a legitimate medium of expression, making a picture meant picking up a camera and shooting. I often think about what a game changer the not-so-humble cameraphone has become. But, while Generation X and Generation Y have transcended easily into the scheme of things and became adept at embracing this new form of seeing and saying, how did the generation before ours take to this medium? In specific, I am referring to our parents, and their shooting habits.

Take a look at your parent's photo gallery (if they allow you to) to see how they think and what their vision of photography is like. I did this exercise recently, going through my mother's phone first. As expected, her gallery was filled with blurry photographs, owing to her poor vision as she refuses to wear her glasses all the time. The images that are not blurry have her thumb sticking to one corner of the frame.

My father's phone, on the other hand, features a carefully curated selection of selfies with various friends, family and even celebrities. Amongst the selfie collection is a very special photograph, one he shot with my mom. He has caught a very sweet moment, one where he cheekily stares at my mother as she looks into the lens, smiling.

That picture made me smile too, and I'm still smiling as I write about it. It makes me wonder though, in our pursuit of perfection, are we forgetting the genuine happiness that one can derive from making a picture? We pride ourselves in being perfectionist photographers, but even a blurry picture, albeit an honest one, can make us happy. Our parents don't care about what cameraphone they're using to make that picture. They are just concerned about being in the moment they are photographing. And there's a lot to learn from that.

Supriya Joshi
supriya.j@network18publishing.com

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A View of Hues

by Abhishek Sharma

"How do I make a beautiful, but commonplace sight look different? That's what I try to ask myself."

To see the winning images from the Readers' Gallery Contest — 'From the Airplane Window' Turn to page 78

12 self assignments that you can take up in the new year
Turn to page 78

*Cover photograph:
Top Row by Candy K,
Bottom Row by
Roc Isern*

“ Photography can only represent the present. Once photographed, the subject becomes part of the past. **”**

BERENICE ABBOT (1898–1991)

Best known for her photos of New York's architecture and urbanscapes, she was also the Photo Editor of the books *Atget, Photographe de Paris* and *The World of Atget*, which was a result of her having acquired a large chunk of the archive of the great Eugène Atget.



One Plus X

Does it Have the X Factor?

The OnePlus X is a much anticipated device, but what does it bring for photographers? Conchita Fernandes finds out.

OnePlus has established quite a reputation by producing the two highly anticipated, feature-packed and competitively priced smartphones in the form of the OnePlus One and 2. This time however, instead of launching a new iteration, it has released a smaller, more affordable (Rs. 16,999) variant in the form of the OnePlus X.

Without any prior customisation, the camera app can be accessed from the phone's lock screen. This is great for making quick photographs, especially when the subject matter is unpredictable.

What's There and What's Not

The OnePlus X comes with a 13MP rear camera with f/2.2 aperture, as opposed to the f/2 aperture present in the OnePlus One and 2. The sensor, one would presume, is the same as the one that we see

in a lot of mid-level smartphones today, which largely means that the image quality is quite good. You do lose out on some features in this thinned-down version... there is a regular LED flash as opposed to the OnePlus 2's Dual LED flash, there is no optical stabilisation, 4k video has been downgraded to 1080p, and the laser-assisted AF system is missing.

The last one, from the above, we don't really miss. AF is quick enough for regular shooting situations, but we did come across a problem similar to one faced by the OnePlus 2. On rare occasions, after locking focus, the shutter wouldn't release even after repeatedly tapping on the button. Thankfully, the problem isn't very frequent.

The phone's screen is smaller than the OnePlus 2, and thus has a higher pixel density at 441ppi. It is vibrant and ensures that photos look crisp and detailed on the display screen.



All photographs by Conchita Fernandes



Producing 20 photographs at one go, the camera's fast burst rate made this photograph possible, especially with moving subjects, like the people in the background.

Impressive Optics

The camera app features modes like HDR, Beauty Mode and Clear Image. A left swipe of the screen gives you the option to select between the Photo, Video, Time Lapse, Slow Motion and Panorama features.

A simple tap on the screen launches the exposure control dial, and lets you tap to focus as well.

Most cameraphone manufacturers use similar sensors across one generation. The difference in the photographic quality is seen because of optics. The OnePlus X has a good lens, which controls flare extremely well, even when shooting against the light, or when light bulbs are around the periphery of the frame. The detail captured is quite good, and in low light, while one sees smearing, the quality is as good as any cameraphone of this price.

The Competition is Stiff

In terms of image quality, the OnePlus X cannot be faulted, but this is a price point where one sees a lot of competition. For a little lesser, at Rs. 14,999, you can get the

Xiaomi Mi 4, which shoots 4k video and also has an f/1.8 lens. And while both OnePlus offerings have good cameras, if it's only still image quality you are looking for, you may want to invest a little more money and get the iPhone 5s, which has dropped in price to around Rs. 22,000.

That said, if you are a OnePlus fan and look forward to its rich Android experience that feels premium, but costs lesser than other manufacturers, the OnePlus X's camera won't disappoint. **BP**

AT A GLANCE

SPECIFICATIONS	13MP, f/2.2 lens, 8MP front camera, 16GB built-in memory (expandable up to 128GB), Qualcomm Snapdragon 801, 3GB RAM, Rs. 16,999
WHAT WE LIKE	Overall design, good camera performance
WHAT WE DISLIKE	Price, erratic shutter button
WHY BUY IT?	The phone's clean and simple camera interface and overall user experience is quite good.

FINAL RATINGS	84%
CAMERA FEATURES	Exposure control, 13MP, 8MP front camera
IMAGE QUALITY	Good daylight and low light performance
VIDEO QUALITY	Decent video recording at 1080p
HANDLING	Smooth and easy to hold
SPEED & RESPONSIVENESS	Good speed but with slight shutter lag



Oppo Neo 7

Nothing Neo About It...

Oppo's Neo 7 does not seem to bring anything new to the table. Natasha Desai investigates whether or not it may be hiding an ace up its sleeve.

Entering the pocket-friendly segment is always a good idea. In 2015, however, it is not just about having a piece of hardware that gets the job done, but providing the best affordable quality at a particular price point. It is this philosophy that Oppo seems to have completely missed out on.

A Packed Menu

The Neo 7's camera UI reminded me of the iOS 9 camera interface, that is, until I went into the options. Here, there are a bunch of options like Ultra HD which combines six images to make a 24MP image, Colourful Night Shot, filters, Double Exposure and a fun GIF creator. The menu is also customisable with plug-ins.

With up to 20 images captured in the Burst Mode and a decent autofocus, there were a lot of fun images that I was able to make.

What Worked and What Didn't

The overall image quality that the phone produces, is average at best. It's low light

AT A GLANCE

SPECIFICATIONS	8MP, Android 5.1, Color OS 2.1, 5-inch TFT qHD 960x540 screen, Qualcomm Quad-core 1.2GHz, 1GB RAM, 16GB (expandable) storage, Rs. 9990.
WHAT WE LIKE	Good colour reproduction, fair amount of detail capture
WHAT WE DISLIKE	Low screen resolution, poor noise control
WHY BUY IT?	It's a stylish-looking phone and has a sturdy enough build. The camera and specifications however leave a lot to be desired.

FINAL RATINGS

	77%
CAMERA FEATURES	12/15
IMAGE QUALITY	27/35
VIDEO QUALITY	16/20
HANDLING	11/15
SPEED & RESPONSIVENESS	12/15

performance is again, average, with a fair amount of noise and smearing that is visible. It does a good job of controlling any direct light sources that may be captured in the frame. It also does a fairly good job of controlling highlights and flare, with no visible purple fringing. I also liked the amount of detail that the f/2, 8MP camera could capture. The autofocus, too performed surprisingly well.

What was most disappointing though was the qHD display, considering it's 2015 and there are full HD screens available in the same price segment.

Hit and Miss

Ultimately, I found the Oppo Neo 7 to be an underwhelming phone. The image quality is average and the disappointing specs are not cushioned by the pocket-friendly price. The strangest thing it seems to have missed out on is the inclusion of a full HD screen.

While it's not a bad phone to use as such, you will find far better specs with the Xolo Black 1x priced at Rs. 9999 which comes with the 13MP, full HD screen, 3GB RAM, 32GB in-built storage or the similarly priced and specced Xiaomi Redmi Note 2 Prime. **EP**

The unremovable 2420 mAH battery lasts a decent amount of time even with continuous shooting and multi-tasking.



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12 Creative Projects You Can Undertake This Year

2016 brings with it a whole new year of innovative and experimental photographic opportunities. Supriya Joshi shows you how to make the most of it with 12 ideas.

Every year, the clock strikes at midnight, and humanity bids goodbye to the year gone by. The new year is always associated with fresh perspectives and beginnings, and as photographers, there's nothing more exciting than trying out new things to shoot. To help you out with ideas, here is a list of 12 creative projects you can do this year, one for every month, entirely with your cameraphone.

70

Food is one of the most photographed subject in cellphone photography. Document each meal you eat, or shoot a recipe from start to finish, or photograph the before and after picture of a plate of a delicious meal.

January: The Month of Promises

On 1 January, write down your list of resolutions for the year. Make it a healthy mix of long-term and short-term goals. Then, pick one of those resolutions, something that you can start on immediately. Your project for the

month is to document yourself working on your goal, capturing the process from ideation to execution. Continue this exercise throughout the year, collating the images on December 2016 to see how you have fared.

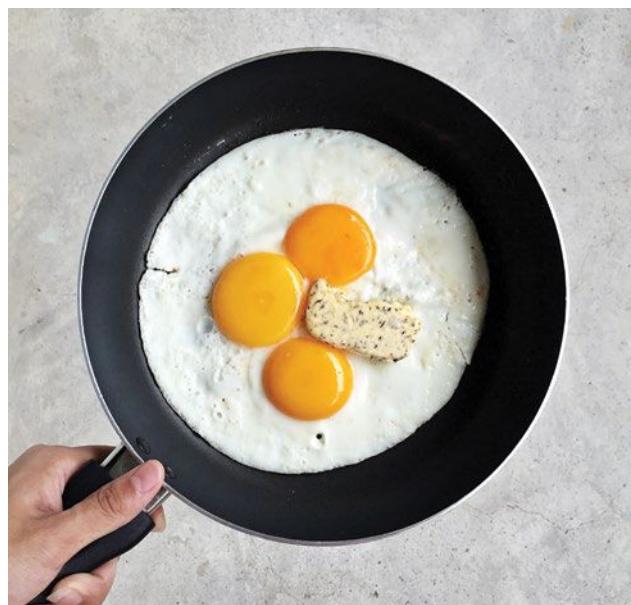
February: It's About Love

Think of the person that means the most to you, whether a parent, a friend or a lover. In this month's assignment, your task is to photograph that one person, without having them physically present in the frame. How would you represent this person without their presence?

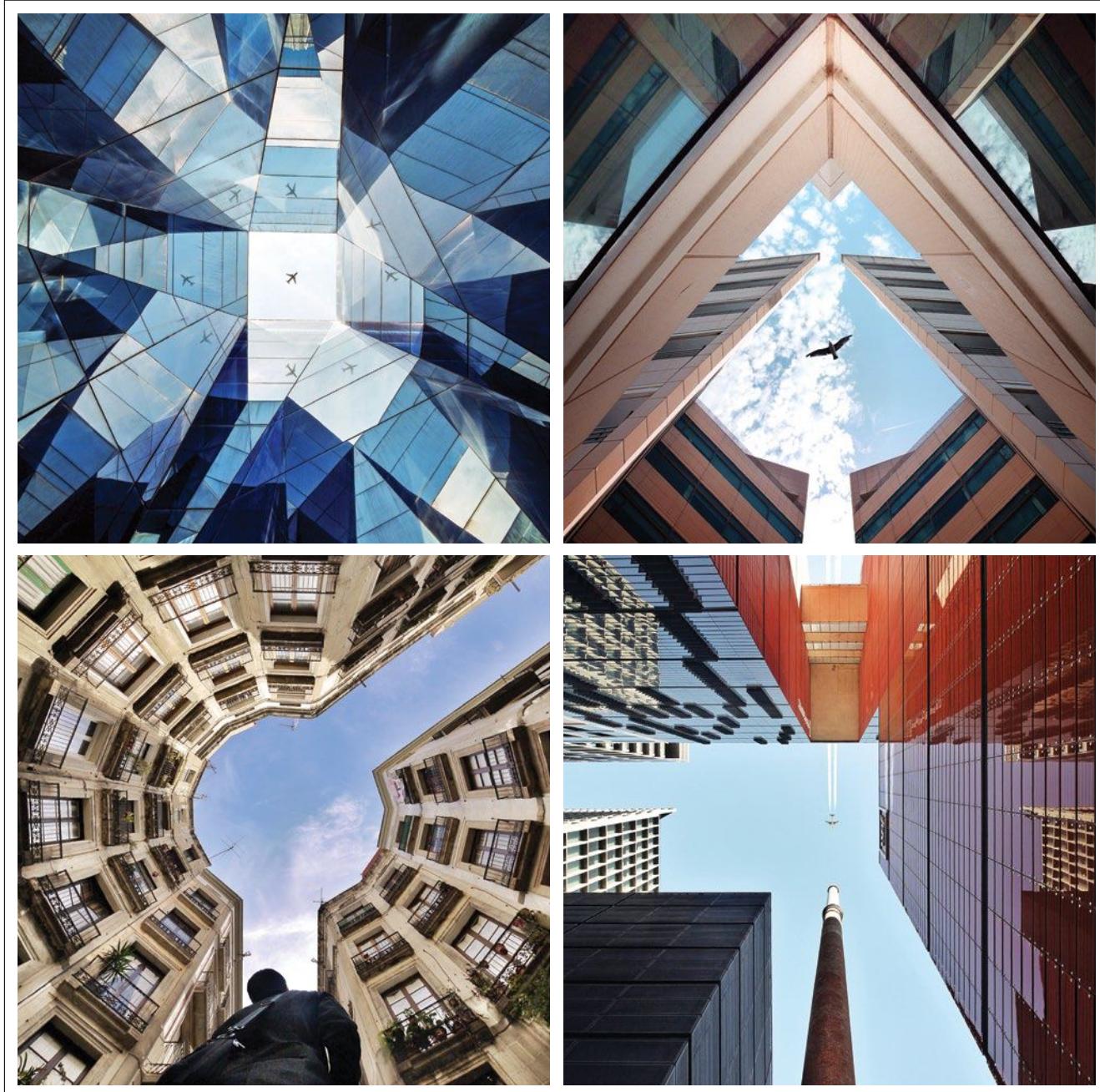
March: Ugly is Beautiful

Go through the camera app of your phone and check the inbuilt filters it

Take a look at Instagram's weekly Hashtag Projects for further assignment ideas.



Eileen Ong (@eileenongx)



offers. Amongst the lot, choose the worst-looking one and make one photograph of something beautiful everyday. You can only use that filter while making the photo. The interpretation of the word 'beautiful' is entirely up to you.

APPS YOU MUST TRY

Uploading several individual photographs of the same event may seem like you are spamming your friend's social media feeds. Use the free app Layout to create instant collages of your images. It's free and available for Android and iOS.

April: Make Fiction a Reality

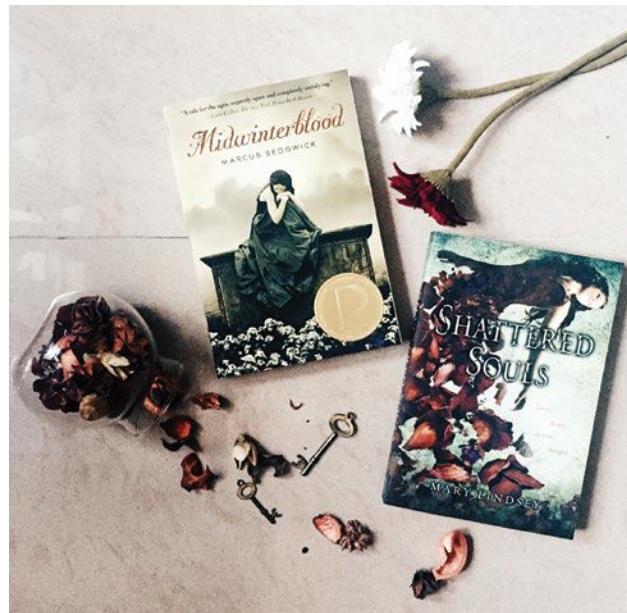
Think of your favourite fictional character, whether from a movie or from a novel. Your assignment for the month is to embody this fictional character, and make pictures from their perspective. Do this for an hour every day, at different times of the day. How would they photograph a particular moment?

What scene would seem exciting enough for them to shoot? At the end of the month, make a visual story of the day in the life of the fictional character.

May: The Blindside

We have all become very accustomed to seeing life through our cameraphone's screen. The challenge for the month is going to take that facility away. When you step out to make pictures, launch the camera app and dim the brightness of your phone to zero, so that you cannot see anything on the screen in bright light. Then, when you see something you would like to shoot, point the phone at

❶ Choose to make pictures only in one angle every day. Alternatively, shoot the same scene from the same spot, but in all possible angles.



Candy K (@therbookishgirl)

it and make a picture, without thinking about how it looks on the screen.

June: Hashtag Mania

Get on Google, and search for the most popular hashtags on Instagram. Every day, select one hashtag and make pictures you think will perfectly represent the same. To make the challenge even more interesting, choose the hashtag of the day with your eyes closed for a totally random selection.

July: Everything is Possible?

Speak with your photography peers and ask them to list out all of the subjects

and themes that they feel cannot shoot with a cameraphone. Ask them to tell you the reasons for the same as well. Your assignment is to make pictures of the things that have been deemed impossible to shoot with your phone. Upload each picture on Instagram and in the caption, mention the supposedly impossible to shoot subject and if you were able to photograph it.

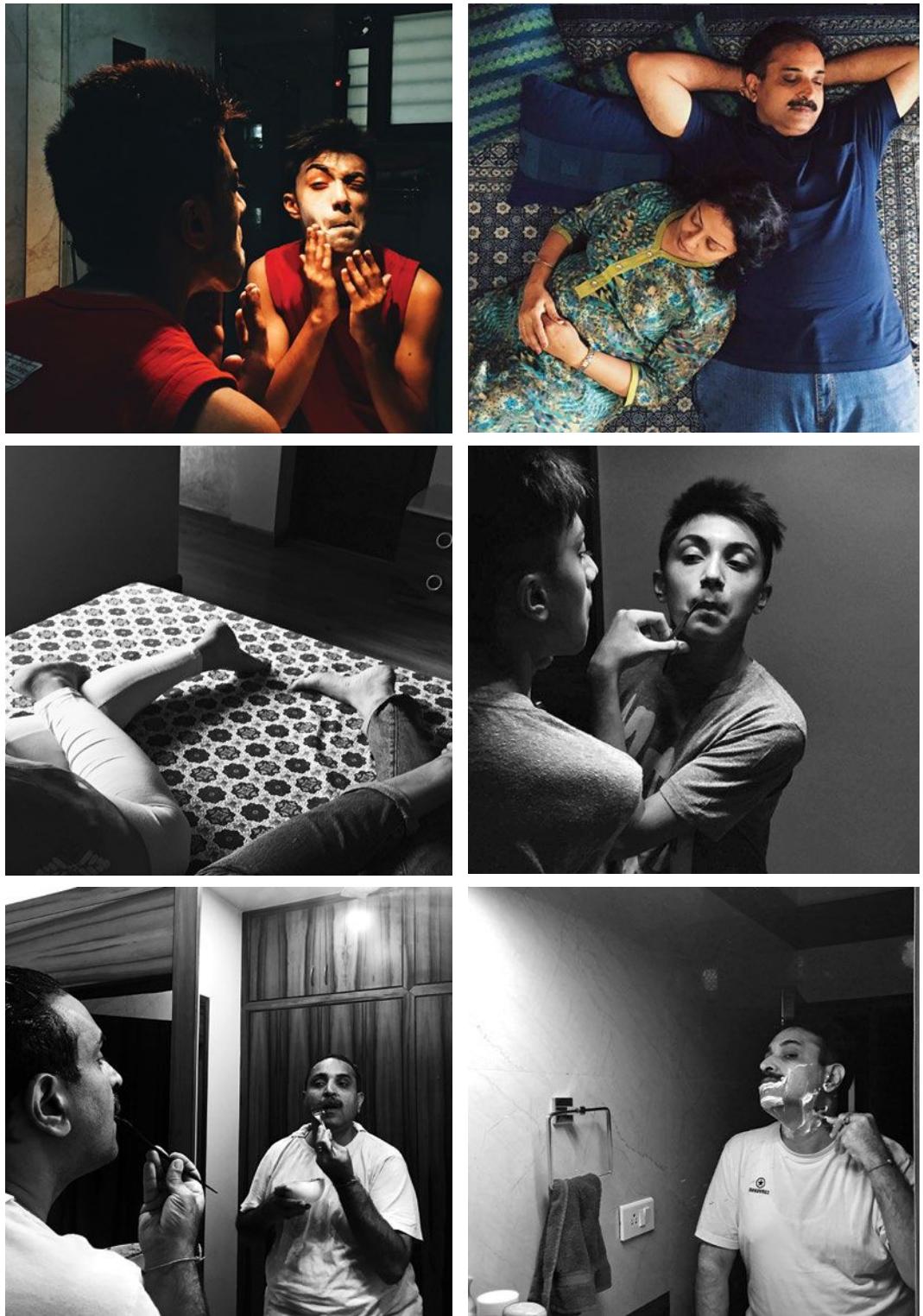
August: From Where You Stand

For this assignment, set alarms on your phone, one for every hour of an eight-hour long day. Whenever the alarm goes off, launch the camera app and make

1 Use your cameraphone to capture your reading progress for the year. Focus on the aesthetic and challenge your stylistic abilities while doing so.

Pick up a dictionary, open a page and point at any word. That is the word you will be representing in a photograph that day.

Hop on an inner-city bus and buy a ticket to the last stop. Without getting off your seat, make a picture of the bus conductor at every stop the bus makes.



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only one picture of whatever is in front of you. At the end of the month, use all 248 images in a timelapse video.

September: A Colourful Walk

Assign the following colours to each week of the month—orange, green, blue and yellow. Each day, go out for a two-

hour long walk, consciously looking out for the colour of the week. The subject you choose does not matter, as long as the colour is captured.

October: The Phone Swap

This activity involves friends who will be willing to swap their phone with yours

❶ **Cellphone photography is the most inconspicuous way of making pictures, which you can use to your advantage by making a family album of candid pictures of your family.**



Alok Rai

for a day each week. Every time you meet, discuss what your friend would like to shoot that day, swap phones and make pictures on your friend's behalf.

November: Hello to Yourself

This month, the focus shifts from the outside to within. Make chits of your best and worst qualities, your inhibitions and strengths and put them in a bowl. Each day, pick a chit and make a self-portrait that reflects the quality listed.

December: Self-Assessment

By this time, you would have made several hundred pictures from the projects

you have undertaken the entire year. Devote December to reflection and self-critique of your work. Go through all the photographs you have made the entire year, and make a strict selection of 24 pictures. Make prints of these 24 pictures and then further cut down your selection to 12 pictures, one for every month of the year. If you are happy with your choice, make several prints of the same and set up a pop-up exhibition for them. Give out your pictures to those who stop by to see them... it will also help you further promote your work. Once that is over, start making a list of assignments for 2017, because creativity never ends! 

➊ Go to the nearest train station, find a bench, and sit there for four hours. Use this time to observe and photograph your fellow commuters in their various moods.

INSTAFOLLOW NOW

If looking at delicious looking food pictures entices you, you must follow New York based foodie, Jen Balisi (@indulgenteats).



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**Better
Photography**

READERS' GALLERY

Presented by



Powering a Greener Tomorrow

Better Cellphone Photography's readers were challenged to put a spin on the conventional photo out of the airplane window, this month.

Winner



➲ A View of Hues

Abhishek Sharma,
Bengaluru

What made me shoot this:

I noticed the light and the lovely colours that were streaming in through the window.

What I learnt: Just by placing my hand on the glass, I was able to make a conventional shot into something different.

Shot with: Apple iPhone 6



➲ The Last Passenger

Asim Wadkar, Mumbai

What made me shoot this:

Quite simply, a delayed flight and curiosity about the goings-on outside the flight. When I saw the woman on the tarmac, I knew that I had the opportunity to make an interesting frame.

What I learnt: The subject's position can make or break an image.

Shot with: Samsung Galaxy Note 2

Honourable Mention

To be featured on these pages, participate in our contests by logging on to betterphotography.in/contests and win exciting prizes!



Honourable Mention



Honourable Mention

Webbed & Winged

Swati Luthra, New Delhi

What made me shoot this:

The sun, the wing and the clouds all lined up perfectly when I looked outside my window. However, instead of focussing on the outside, I decided to focus on the glass in front of me.

What I learnt: The obvious view in front of you need not be the thing you shoot eventually.

Shot with: Apple iPhone 6

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On its Own Path

Aboli Thosar, Pune

What made me shoot this:

The lone river making its way through the mountains, reminded me of how difficult journeys in life can be.

What I learnt: I was trying to shoot the view without the wing, but the inclusion of it added an interesting element to the image.

Shot with: Samsung Galaxy Note 2

GRAND PRIZE

The grand prize winner, gets a 4200mAh Godrej GP PowerBank, the perfect companion for cellphone and travel photographers.



All the nominees will also be featured on betterphotography.in.

*Actual colour of the Powerbank may vary

Better Photography

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www.betterphotography.in

Better Pictures

GASTRONOMICA

DELIGHTFULLY DELECTABLE WAYS OF CREATING DELICIOUSLY DECEPTIVE FOOD PHOTOS

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Food, one of the most primordial human needs, has taken an interesting route over the several centuries that man has been on earth. What began as a means of quelling hunger, eventually became a symbol of wealth and prosperity. Today though, it has turned into an obsession, where it has become almost impossible to resist the urge to 'snap' a quick picture of one's meal, thanks to our insatiable urge and the oft trivialisation of social media conversation. But there is another side to this. Over the years, art has been running a parallel conversation about our relationship with food. **Conchita Fernandes** talks to five such photographers who have derived new meanings from food, as they speak about their love and dedication for the subject, in all its beautiful and bizarre forms.



Calling Attention to the Unremarkable

Discarded items take centrestage in Jiaxi Yang's photographs of still life. By relocating them from their original contexts, she aims to call attention to the unexceptional, and at the same time, defamiliarise the ordinary.

From the time I began photography, I have always been drawn to the idea of exploring different ways of interrupting daily routines, by carrying out everyday activities in ways that are not usually expected of them. This led me to eventually stumble upon the idea for a series that I call *The Horizontal Mode of the Waking Life*.

One day, I went to the butcher and asked for a pound of black pudding and what he handed me looked exactly like a slice of chocolate cake. That's what spurred my interest in photographing it.

My inspiration for this work was an unlikely one. It sprouted from the idea of sleepwalking through daily life, where we do not notice all the traces of desire and absurdity that may surround our routine existence.

While in New York, the unfamiliar context made me aware of my cultural

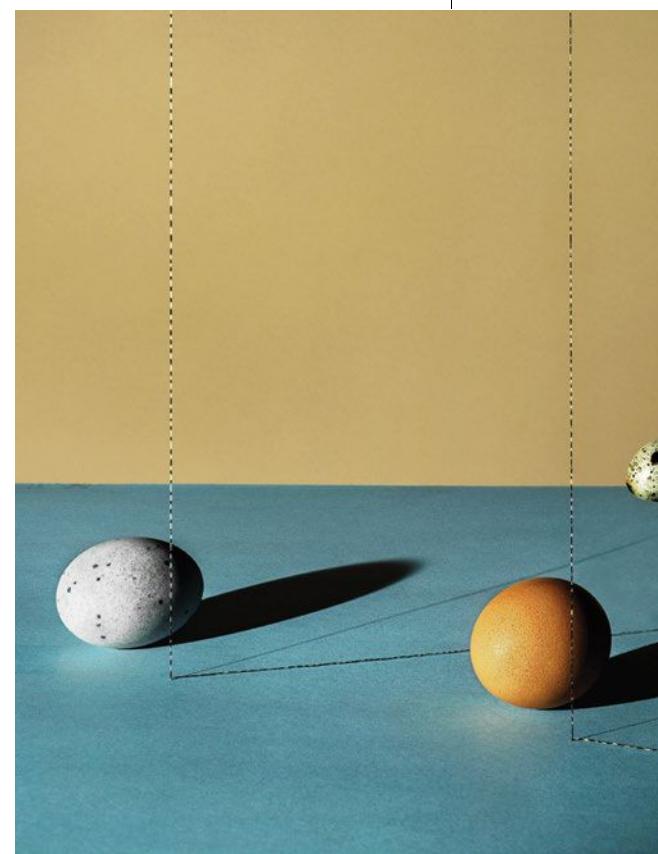
relationship to food. My work considers the lives of food and objects, transplanting them from their original contexts and functions. I do this to call attention to the unremarkable, to things we barely notice, and the possible ways in which these objects interact with each other in modern everyday life.

Seeing the Familiar in Unfamiliar Ways

I am often asked about the nature of the relationship between the objects I have used in the series. I combine items that are not meant to be together, and explore the ambiguous relationship between them.

By displacing them from reality and arranging them in different ways, I want

I always wanted to create something abstract with straight lines, and also experiment with different shapes and forms. This image presented me with that opportunity.



All photographs by Jiaxi Yang



My work pays careful attention to context, and aims to challenge the line between photography and sculpture. I do this by tearing apart objects and then combining different items, just like how an artist moulds clay.

I have always been influenced by minimalist artists like Fred Sandback, Agnes Martin and Carl Andre, and photographers like Thomas Demand, Barbara Kasten and Kenji Aoki.



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Finding Inspiration

Looking at the works of famous artists who painted still life, is a great way to begin your photographic journey in the genre. Look at the paintings of Francisco de Zurbarán, Heinrich Uhl and Vincent Van Gogh to get an idea of how these masters lit and arranged their subjects.

to recontextualise these objects, and make one see them differently. What I want my viewers to notice is, the presence of beauty in the unexceptional and thus perceive habitual existence in a different light. I also want my viewers to imaginatively construct fictional narratives of the life of the owners of these objects, and eventually do the same with their own life as well.

Finding Subjects

All the food and household objects that I have used, are mundane, overlooked and discarded items. If you look around your personal space, you will find similar inspirations on the cutting board or inside trash cans. Through this, I also wish to highlight themes related to waste, decay and the delicacy which exists in these items.

① I wanted to photograph my subjects in such a way where the viewer cannot tell that the picture was made in my personal home space. Here, I have masked this aspect by draping the furniture, thus giving it a theatrical look.

After falling in love with photography, Jiaxi Yang began her studies at the International Center of Photography in New York. She has been a recipient of several awards—PDN Photo Annual 2015, LensCulture Emerging Talents 2015 and others. You can find her work at www.jiaxiyang.com and on Instagram (jiaxi_yang).



All photographs by Carolin Strothe

If you're a stylist, you have to be a collector too. I am always on the lookout for unique props and photo backdrops, which I like to personally handpaint.

To Food, With Love

Combining her passion for food, design, photography and swing dance, Carolin Strothe lovingly blends the best of all these worlds into her images.

Finding Inspiration

Inspiration goes beyond photography and art. For me, it could be a trip to the farmer's market, a cookbook, a food magazine and sometimes, even dancing to Louis Armstrong's *Cheesecake* song.

From a very young age, I have loved everything about food. I practically grew up in two gardens—that of my parents and grandparents, where I learned how fruits and vegetables grow, and the various delicacies that can be prepared from them. In fact, one of my fondest memories was picking apples and

berries in the garden, and this was what fuelled my love for baking and cooking.

Engaging the Viewer

As a photographer who loves to document this integral aspect of my life, my greatest thrill lies in conceptualising the food arrangements. It is also the most taxing part ▶

SHOOTING TECHNIQUE

Though symmetry has its advantages, it can sometimes be harsh and monotonous when introduced to a natural subject like food. So I prefer arranging my spreads asymmetrically, to make it a more interesting visual.





It's important to learn the basics of photography. But don't let it come in the way of your personal expression.

This is something I follow in all my personal and commissioned projects.



of my process as it involves reading and rereading recipe cards to fully realise what I have in mind.

Casting the Characters

To me, a table spread is like a movie set, where the main dish is the protagonist and the table is the center stage. Everything else around it are supporting actors.

I want my images to be an extension of my dedication towards food. I also like to plan them as gateways into different time portals and parts of my personality. If I am feeling

whimsical, my table spread will reflect the same, and thus, so will the photograph.

It's really important for any food stylist or photographer to ensure they don't burden the viewer with overly complex photos with too many elements. There should be a definite reason for the placement of absolutely every object on the table. God is in the detail, and I follow that to the utmost. And whenever you feel less inspired, remember what Julia Child had said, "Find something you're passionate about and keep tremendously interested in it."

Cooking, styling and photographing food is a time-consuming process, and one has to be painstakingly meticulous. Ice cream for instance, takes the longest to photograph. Generally, it takes me 1-2 hours to a day to photograph a single image. A picture series usually takes about a week.

I like to bring in little snippets from the 1930-50s era of swing dance, as it's one of my favourite dance styles. At times, I incorporate the theme in the form of the colour palette I use on my table arrangement. At other times, I like to include vintage photographs or postcards within the scene.

Carolin Strothe is a freelance food photographer, photo designer, food stylist, art director and author based in Germany. In May 2013, she started her food and lifestyle blog www.frauherzblut.de where she posts recipes and images of food. You can also find her on Instagram (@frauherzblut) and her new website www.foodstoryteller.de

Being a vegan, the *One Third* series took on an interesting turn when I had to go shopping for meat products. I was worried about encountering a friend and having to explain my purchase! It almost felt a little like being unfaithful to my lifestyle and diet.



Resurrecting the Inanimate

For a period of nine months, **Klaus Pichler** turned his bathroom into a nesting ground for creatures that will turn your stomach. But before you jump into his photographs, take a deep breath, and allow his once delicious masterpieces to slowly sink in your consciousness.

The *One Third* series was inspired by a 2011 survey conducted by the United Nations on global food waste. It was revealed that one third of the total food produced for human consumption goes to waste, on account of improper storage and transportation facilities, while 900 million people are left to starve. This struck a chord with me, and led to the idea of creating photographs that would provoke the viewer to question his purchasing and consumption habits.

Let the Subject Become Your Body and Soul

When I began the series, I knew I wanted to maintain a closeness with the entire process from start to finish. I was keen to find out how it felt to photograph and coexist with rotting food, and in turn, my reaction to its smell and whether that influences my shooting process. So instead of renting a studio, I decided to work on the series from the confines of my apartment.

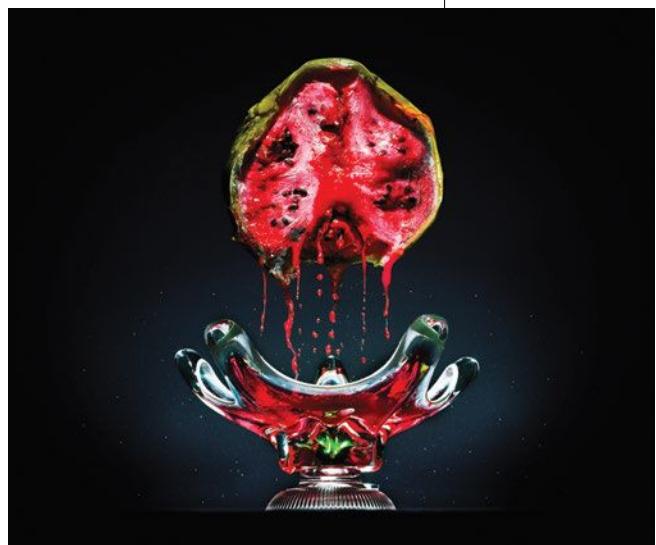
I had a pile of transparent plastic containers lying in my bathroom, in which I left the food to rot. In some cases, I would arrange the food in the props you see in the photographs, like in the glass bowls and plates. At other times, I would simply leave it in its original state.

The rate of decay varied anywhere from one week to a month. If I was not happy with the decomposition, I would let the food stay a little longer and check on it periodically till I was happy with its state of rot. ▶

Finding Inspiration

As a photographer, you should be open to work of any nature. This could be in the form of a mural on a street corner or even a lengthy statistical study. What it ultimately boils down to is how you derive inspiration from the unrelated subject, that it ultimately influences the choices you make in your craft.

My photographs are reminiscent of works from art and photographic history, and pop culture. I wanted to bring in this second layer of meaning as food is more than something you consume, it is also culture, society, politics and more. Therefore, the idea behind every image is a highly political decision, including questions related to the environment, ethics and globalisation.



All photographs by Klaus Pichler / Anzenberger Agency





The Risks Involved

The most difficult aspect of the project was handling the food. As I transported the rotting matter from the bathroom to the setup in my living room, I had to make sure that I wear gloves and a face mask, to prevent myself from inhaling any of the harmful spores, especially since some of them had become carcinogenic in nature.

For the setup, I decided to use the same aesthetic employed when photographing items of luxury, as I wanted to convey a sense of ironic regality and grandeur to the once vibrant and flavourful edible items.

➲ I worked alone on the entire series, mostly because I did not want to risk another person being exposed to the spores released by the rotting food.

The Other Side of the Coin

The photographs however, were only one aspect of the project. The other one dealt with the data I collected on every food item's life history and the resources that went into

transporting it from the field to the shelf. This, to me, was an integral exploration into building a connection between waste and transportation. It was a tedious and challenging task, as I encountered one too many disgruntled sellers who were less than enthusiastic about revealing the details of their products.

A Delightful Ending

After the series came to an end, I was relieved to rid my apartment of the awful stench. The worst was the chicken, which I had left to rot for a week.

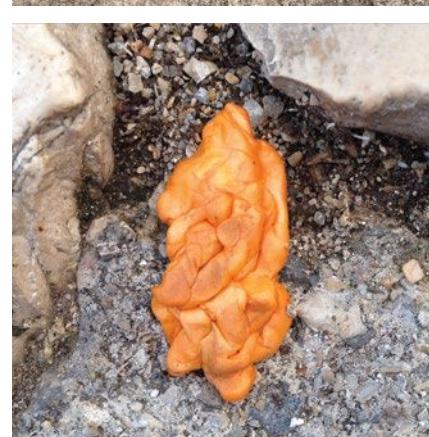
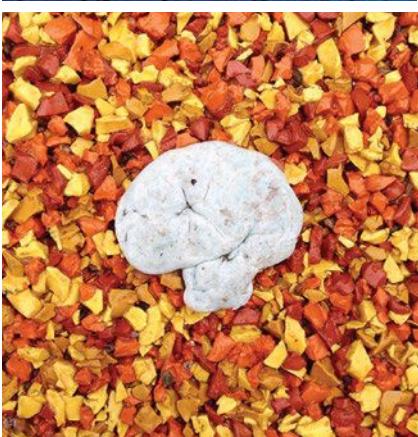
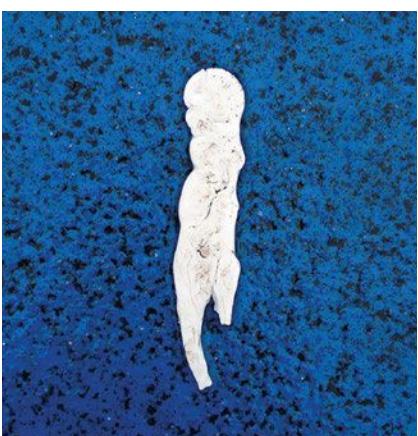
Nevertheless, the project turned out to be very rewarding. I was ecstatic to learn that the series was adopted by the United Nations as a representation of the same survey that inspired the project. I cannot think of a better honour than this.

➲ One of the challenging aspects was not knowing what the food would look like after several days of decomposition. This made it difficult to plan and previsualise the photos.

Chaos has been a large part of my practice. Every idea starts unpredictably, and then I patiently carve something out of it.

Klaus Pichler studied landscape architecture but switched to photography in 2005. Since then, he has occupied himself with personal projects including assignments for international clients and magazines. You can find his work at www.kpic.at and on www.facebook.com/kpic.photos.

SHOOTING TECHNIQUE



It's very satisfying when I receive photos of gum from people who follow my project on Instagram. It feels good to know that my series has inspired them to observe the environment around them.



As a photographer, I am often drawn to subjects that are viewed as waste. In this case, I have not just developed a liking for a subject considered wasteful, but one that most people are annoyed by.

All photographs by Sanne Couprie 93

The Afterlife of Gum

The street is home to several elements, but none as misunderstood and underappreciated as the humble chewing gum, mentions Sanne Couprie.

The chewing gum has a shortlived but fascinating existence. What begins as a burst of flavour in your mouth, eventually finds its way in a street corner, or between the crevices of bricks, or becomes a final resting place for a curious family of ants. However, the most enthralling bit is to see how it's constantly evolving to keep up with the environment.

The Changing Nature of Gum

I couldn't help myself from consciously looking out for these hidden gems. I usually

prefer the more solitary pieces which I photograph from above.

Sometimes, it's the colour of gum that captivates me, and at other times it's the texture. Shoes and tire prints also lead to uniquely formed patterns, as well as the changing weather. When it's cold, the gum cracks and loses its colour and when it's hot it gains colour and becomes super flexible.

People get curious seeing me kneeling down photographing the ground. Some check the spot to see what's so interesting. Others ask what I'm doing, to which I gladly refer to my Instagram account.

CThe idea for the *Chewing Scum* series came to me a few years ago in Milan, where I found three pieces of chewing gum neatly arranged in the corner of some steps to a museum. It was after this encounter that I decided to actively document discarded pieces of gum.

Finding Inspiration

Most often, photographers are so caught up with the specifics of the art that they simply forget the simple joy of making pictures. So don't fuss over little details. Instead, take a walk down the street and just shoot.

Based in Netherlands, Sanne Couprie holds a Masters degree in Sociology and has been involved in the field of development and cooperation. He has also been freelancing as a photographer since 2006. You can find his work on his website www.photocouprie.com and on Instagram (@chewingscum).

SHOOTING TECHNIQUE

Since I have a degree in architecture, I wasn't new to the world of miniature scale models. This made it easy for me to flesh out my ideas for the *Minimize* series.

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Building a Lilliputian World

William Kass' images of tiny figurines juxtaposed with his fantastical sets carved out of food, are sure to make the little child within you squeal with delight. Working solo, he explains what drives his interest to continue creating playful narratives with food.

Finding Inspiration

Perfectionism is okay, but to a certain extent. No matter how good an image is, you will always find things in it to improve. Don't be too hard on yourself. Make bad art once in a while, so that it spurs you to introspect and do better.

The *Minimize* project, as humorous and fun as it looks, wasn't just a result of my fascination and need to explore the possibilities achievable with food; it was a passion that went beyond that. The inspiration for the project was derived from everyday life and how food is an indispensable medium to sustain life on earth; while at the same time, millions continue to go hungry day after day.

Hence, the idea of placing miniature figurines of human beings with food, which humans rely on for their existence, appealed to me greatly. That said, even though the underlying intent was to highlight the issue, I did not want my photographs to project any slithers of seriousness. And for this reason, I make sure to inject every imaginary scene that I create with high doses of humour and drama.

While I recreate scenes from popular movies and even photographs, there are sets in the project which have been inspired from personal life experiences as well.





It's not enough to place a figure on food and be done with it. You need to find or develop context of what the characters are doing and how they are interacting with the various other elements.

Conjuring Up Ideas

Brainstorming ideas is probably one of the most fun aspects of the project. My favourite place to go to for inspiration is the local marketplace. It is here that I am greeted with a bombardment of a thousand ideas, right after my eyes have feasted on all the vibrant and fresh fruits and vegetables. For instance, the lines and gradients present in lettuce leaves reminded me of tidal waves. This resulted in a photograph of a miniature surfer riding the seemingly dramatic waves of the lettuce.

Movies too, are great sources of inspiration. I have recreated scenes from the *Titanic* and *Free Willy*, to name a few.

Overwhelming, But Fun

Since I work alone, I end up spending a lot of time carving, gluing, setting up and photographing the various elements in my images. Sometimes it can be a little overwhelming, but I enjoy spending long hours in my studio. Mindful of the dangers of waste, I don't use a lot of food in the sets, and whatever I do use usually ends up on my dinner plate. Only the bits that have been contaminated by glue are discarded.

As of now, I don't see a foreseeable end to my fictitious worlds. The whole process of ideation and creation is very therapeutic and also a wonderful break from the hustle and bustle of daily life. **BP**

Being challenged to make do with less equipment often makes us creative and more innovative in overcoming problems. Therefore, try restricting yourself to a single lens, and see what you come up with.

Children are often more creative than adults, and to make successful art, there are times that each one of us must discover the child within us, and rediscover the world through curious eyes.



William Kass is a graduate of Architecture and Urbanism from the University of Fine Arts in São Paulo, and also holds a post-graduate degree in photography. He has been a photographer since 2013, producing works for the advertising and fine art markets. You can see his work at www.williamkass.com and on Instagram (@wkass).



January: Endive, radicchio, kale, turnips, leeks (left). October: Mushrooms, greens (right).

ON ASSIGNMENT



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Kaleidoscopic Food

Henry Hargreave and Caitlin Levin welcome you into their vibrant and wondrous world of scanned fruits and vegetables. They invite you to take a look at their trippy-looking works of art.

The thought behind the series was to show food in an unexpected yet interesting way, and also to explore the various possibilities of what people can do with it.

Have you ever looked closely at the core of the fruits and vegetables you consume? Simple as they appear on the exterior, they are quite fascinating to look at on the inside. Just cut one open and notice how the inner lines and crevices intermingle to form interesting patterns. Even the smallest dent or cut, instead of marring their beauty, gives the fruits and vegetables an interesting texture, thus confirming the best of nature's artistry.

My Perspective

The series wasn't conceived until my colleague Caitlin Levin, an artist herself, and I worked together on a project for *The Wall Street Journal*, where we were supposed

My Assignment

Description

Photographing nature's magical bounty

Duration

The photographs were shot over the course of a single year

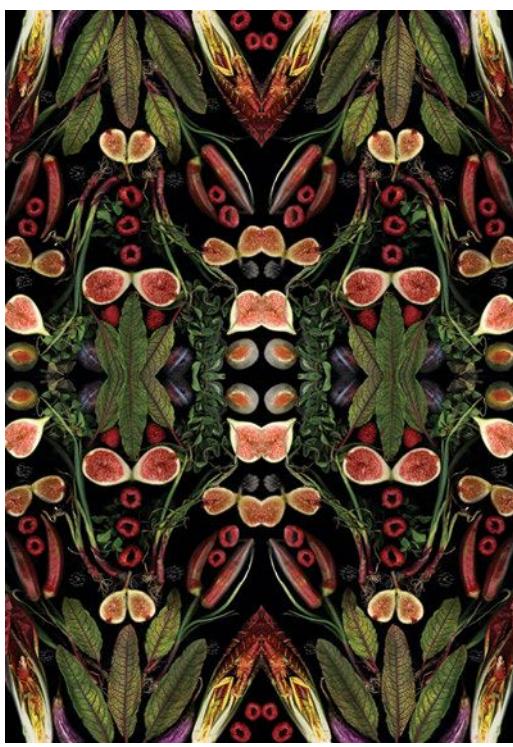
Notes

We wanted to make sure that we authentically represented the produce available in season, so we did one scan each month.

to create a wallpaper of seasonal fruits and vegetables. It immediately occurred to us how this could be something we could explore all year round. Moreover, I was keen on focusing on a particular aspect of human consumption, that is, how we expect seasonal produce to be available throughout ▶

June: Fava, chives, apricots, cherries, plums, sugar snaps, peaches, blueberries, strawberries, radish.





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February: Papaya, radish, onions, clementine, oregano, passion fruit, chive flowers. April: Spring onions, purple potatoes, fingerling potatoes, carrots, herbs. July: Figs, plums, oregano, ochre greens, raspberries, onions. March: Asparagus, artichoke, broccolini, greens, string beans (clockwise).

the year. The fact is, most people are not aware of the types of produce they should be consuming in a particular season, and with this project, we wanted to educate the masses in an engaging way.

My Equipment

We used a flatbed scanner to make the photographs.

The Process

The project began with the idea of symmetry. In the beginning, we

experimented a lot with various sauces and pureed food to resemble Rorschach inkblots. However, we did not achieve the results we were hoping for and proceeded to using whole foods. Both Caitlin and I arranged and manipulated the materials and images together. While some of the configurations took no time at all, others took many hours and several attempts!

Tips on Getting Your Scans Right the First Time

- **Selecting the Right Materials:** Avoid choosing objects with sharp edges, as this could scratch the glass surface of the scanner.
- **Using a Transparency:** If you decide to scan liquid materials like food colouring or eggs, make sure that you first place a transparency over the scanner. Also, remember to keep the scanner's lid open to prevent any damage to it.
- **Don't Let Out the Light:** Cover the scanner glass with any piece of black material to ensure that no light escapes from the scanner. Alternatively, you can experiment with backdrops of different colours and textures.

Even though we had a lot of fun doing it, scanning is a very different process from photography. When using a camera, the images can be viewed instantly, but with a scanner there is a lot of back and forth. We not only had to wait for the image to be scanned, but every time a piece of vegetable or fruit did not go with the overall spread, the arrangement had to be altered and the process would begin all over again. The toughest part however, was keeping the glass of the scanner dry. The juice and moisture produced from the vegetables and fruits did not look appetising at all.

After the fruits and vegetables were scanned, we simply flipped the image twice to create the kaleidoscope effect. Nothing from the original frame was altered, as we wanted to show the freshness and the beauty of the produce in its natural state.

➲ Pears, potatoes, sage, rosemary, brussel sprouts, shallots, persimmons, mandarins, cranberries, pomegranate. (This was the first food scan that Caitlin and I created for *The Wall Street Journal*).



➲ September: Corn, garlic, beans, Mexican sour gherkins, ground cherries, sunchoke, dill.

As for the fate of all the wonderful produce, Caitlin and I juiced, pureed and ate almost all the fruits and vegetables we scanned. The few that did not make it lived on forever in the photographs. ☺

—As told to Conchita Fernandes

To view more of Henry's and Caitlin's work, you can visit their website www.hargreavesandlevin.com

➲ November: Purple cabbage, bok choy, shallots, cauliflower, tangelo, pomegranate seeds, sunchoke.



ShowCase

Twilight washes over Pokhran (a place of five mirages) Rann (a local word for white desert) in a brilliant blaze of colour.

Our train of GL class SUVs raced across the endless salt flatlands, beating a retreat towards Fort Pokhran, where we spent the night.

Photograph by K Madhavan Pillai

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A Desert Odyssey

Beyond the fantastic driving experiences in Rajasthan, the recent **Starstruck** drive by **Mercedes-Benz** and **OVERDRIVE** magazine was filled with awe-inspiring sights and stories. Photography by **Suresh Narayanan & K Madhavan Pillai**.

Longewala, Rajasthan, December 5, 1971. We remember this date as the first major attack on India's Western front by Pakistan. The world knows of it as the most unequal battle since World War II and the most unequal victory in modern war history. On this day, a column of over 45 tanks, an equal number of heavily armoured vehicles, and 2500 soldiers crossed the borders into India, under the cover of night, in a bid to capture Jaisalmer and Jodhpur. At the frontier post of Longewala, they encountered an Indian division of 120 light infantry soldiers. What followed was the stuff of legend.

By the next morning, aided both by brilliant strategy on the Indian side and the lack of it among the Pakistani ranks, 37 tanks lay decimated, and over 200 Pakistani soldiers were killed, even as the 'A' Company, 23rd Battalion of the Punjab Regiment, lost two of their own.

On December 5, 2015, on the battle's 44th anniversary, our convoy of five Mercedes-Benz GL class SUVs rolled to a stop at Longewala from Jodhpur, where the participants of Starstruck paid their homage to the martyrs and heroes of the war. This was our very first halt, and a befitting beginning of the Starstruck drive.

GREAT MASTERS

Laura Letinsky

Quietude and human presence in still lives

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1000 WORDS

Celebrating the best photos in the media last month

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Memorable Moments from the Mercedes Starstruck Drive

(On the right, from top to bottom) • Our adventurers triumphantly signal their victory over a Pakistani tank at the Longewala War Memorial.

- Participants also got the chance to experience g-forces build up in the 2016 Mercedes-AMG GT S, as it touched 0 to 100kmph in 4 seconds.
- A spectacular desert sunset forms an apt backdrop for windmills made of gargantuan Mercedes-Benz logos, rotating lazily in the gentle evening breeze.
- At night, a fantastic canopy of stars beckons over the silent desert sands.



Suresh Narayanan



K Madhavan Pillai

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K Madhavan Pillai



K Madhavan Pillai



On our third evening in the desert, a troupe of Rajasthani folk musicians and performers enlivened the night with their performances. A fire-eater spits a pillar of flame in a magnificent show of skill and daredevilry.

K. Madhavan Pillai



Suresh Narayanan

➊ Kilometers of open roads in an undulating landscape under breathtaking skies greet our convoy of five cars. The headlamps of two of the cars were used to light up the other three in this photo.

Over the next three days, the participants of the drive were treated to a variety of experiences, including taking turns behind the wheel of the powerful SUVs, under the watchful eyes of the OVERDRIVE team.

The colours of the deserts in Rajasthan is to be seen to be believed. The vast expanse of pale sands dotted with undergrowth and bushes, and the occasional windmill farms was a far cry from the concrete jungles that most of us were used to. Towards the evenings, the skies turned into a gigantic show of pastel tones, rich hues, and streaking high-altitude clouds.

At night, temperatures dropped. Even as the cars rolled into the desert camp where we stayed right next to shifting sand dunes, we were welcomed by a folk music and dance troupe, who performed around a crackling bonfire. Later, as the embers died down and the camp lights switched off, the night sky transformed into a sea of stars. We were accompanied by an astronomer, who explained the skies and showed us the Orion Nebula through his telescope.

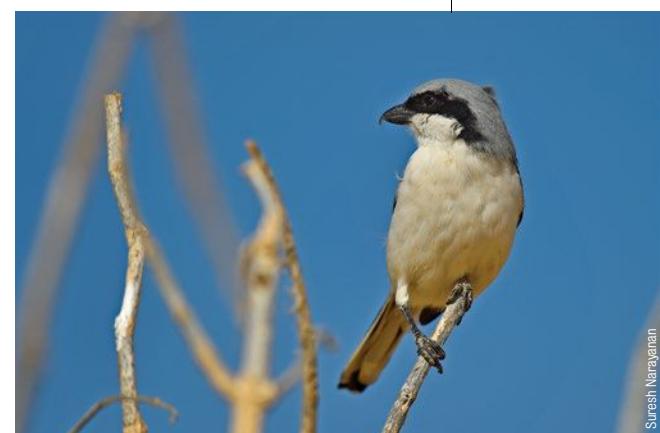
The next day, the convoy left for Pokhran Rann to experience driving on the salt flatlands. Once an ancient seabed

that eventually dried up, leaving behind a massive, white plain of salt, it was a discovery for us all to find the Rann teeming with a variety of wildlife. Spending the night within the grandeur and beauty of the 600 year old Fort Pokhran was yet another unforgettable experience.

On the last day and the last drive towards Jodhpur airport, participants got a last feel for their favourite cars. We all bid our farewells, took a long look at the incredible land of Rajasthan, and promised ourselves to get back again someday. **BP**

➌ For the wildlife enthusiast, animal and bird sightings were common. This curious Southern Grey Shrike watched our antics for almost half an hour as we drove on the dunes.

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Suresh Narayanan

Lubricant Partner



Tyre Partner



Hospitality Partner



Hospitality Partner



Hospitality Partner



Untitled 1, from the series *Roma*, 2009. All the photographs from this set were made at a chain of historic hotels called Palazzo, in Rome.

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Laura Letinsky

Laura Letinsky's rendition of still life photography is woven through various layers of emotions and transformations, as Sakshi Parikh finds out.

She walks into her studio with a sense of familiarity. She reexplores the space and tries to build visual relationships. A certain point of tension is achieved that marks the beginning of an arrangement. Laura is not interested in individual objects as much as the whole frame. There is no prescribed method, but there is an insight. It builds slowly and goes on for hours... sometimes, days.

In her studio, she isn't Laura Letinsky, one of the most remarkable voices in still

life photography today. She is simply on a quest to create something meaningful, using art to comment on love and longing, on the forgotten and the remembered, on the fleeting and fragile, on obsolescence and neglect, and on society's materialistic attitude. Symbolism lays the foundation for her work. She uses it to develop subtle connections. "I like working alone. I feel protective of my thoughts in the studio. I can't let go of them and the presence of people does not allow me to take my own time to think" she says.

“These images are all metaphors for what has remained and what cannot be avoided.”



Untitled 12, from the series *III Form and Void Full*, 2011. Despite the use of cutouts from her previous photographs and elsewhere, Laura says, “the term ‘collage’ isn’t applicable to this series as the pictures are made in my studio, and not as flat scenes.”

Expectance and Acceptance

Before stepping into the world of still life, Laura worked with portraiture. Her book, *Venus Inferred* includes intimate portraits of couples wrapped around the politics of home. Yet, she missed a sense of freedom. At the time, she was moved by the depiction of mortality, decay and other human problems in 17th century Dutch Vanitas paintings. She became more and more drawn to commonplace objects because she felt that, unlike humans, they did not aspire to be something else.

Her early work implies human presence without them being there. For instance, in her series *Mornings and Melancholia* (1997-2001) she documents the aftermath of a dinner party, the morning after. In a sublimely silent way, her frames show a deep pining for the presence of loved ones, much after they have gone.

A common thread that runs through her work seems to be about impermanence, fragility and decay, especially visible in her work *Hardly More Than Ever* (2004). Her subjects include leftover food bits, peeled fruits like an overripe melon, plastic containers and so on. Observations of forgotten details, the remains of daily survival, and pleasure, are an inspiration for this series. It shows her transition from the idea of romance and yearning towards acceptance, where she tries to create art from whatever is available.

More recently, Laura has been drifting away from the vicissitudes of romance. She finds it distracting and 'an effective strategy to forget about our day-to-day problems and needs'. She comments, "Romance takes our mind away from real-life concerns. In my photographs, I try to problematise the idea of longing, the kind of work that romance is accomplishing. It is a hard task. Romance is integral to creation and the lack of it is non-pleasurable."

Laura defies conventions in food photography by often including the other end of the table in her photos, and by letting spaces, planes, lines and shadows add to the emphasis and narrative. It is fascinating how she arranges her compositions, and plays with geometry. In her new photo series titled *Ill Form and Void Full*, corners consciously meet the edges of her frame, ▶



Untitled 29, from the series
III Form and Void Full,
2011. The delicacy of her
compositions is heightened
by her careful creation and
positioning of shadows,
to beget a sense of
three dimensionality.



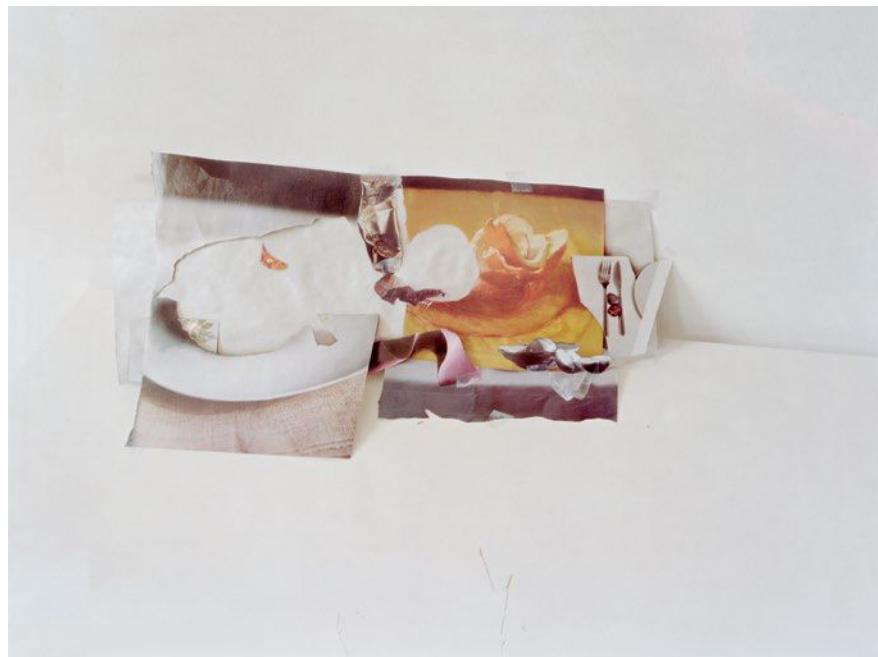
➊ *Untitled 21*,
from the series,
III Form and Void Full,
2011. Notice the common
elements between the
images in this series and
Untitled 54, to the right.

thereby creating both a point of closure and a way for the eye to move. Yet, viewers are compelled to navigate by making their own choices of viewpoints, rather than having one omnipotent object chosen as the centre of the composition by the photographer.

“Photography is All About Obsolescence”

Laura elaborates on this statement by saying, “We live in a world where photographs demand more photographs. They generate a need for desire. My understanding of desire is from a psychoanalytical point of view.

"I want to create an illusion of perfection. A picture is a lot of hard work that comes together and performs itself as an illusion, as perfection."



Desire involves something being just out of reach—close enough that we know it is there, but not close enough, that we can have it. Capitalism also operates on the system of craving and incentivising desire.

Our constant hunger for images also demands a constant production of photographs so that not one of them gets appreciated. I don't think there is a way out because being a part of this image culture ▶





④ **Untitled 3**, from the series *III Form and Void Full*, 2010. Just as much as her earlier series compels her viewers to see the emotions within each image, the lack of the same in her recent work gets viewers to think tangentially beyond the image and its meaning.

is just so satisfying. My photographs from 2010 are a way for me to try and address the burden of capitalism and desire, and to propose some other way of seeing the world and being a part of it. At the same time, it is probably futile."

Bringing about a Change

Laura removes romance from *III Form and Void Full* by using her old work and magazine images as raw material. Contrary to the meticulous care with which she created her earlier work, she has allowed a certain shoddiness to creep in. On being asked about 'consuming' her own work, she laughs and says, "It's cannibalism! I think photography is a promiscuous medium. It feeds off of itself and it is kind of interchangeable."

This particularly seems so easy with digital reproduction and transmission. For me, the pivotal moment occurred when the soldiers of Abu Ghraib took photos of Muslim prisoners being held, and the kind of torture they were inflicting upon them. The way those photos were available around the world minutes, rather seconds, after

taking them, shows how oddly immoral photography and its consumption can be."

She feels deeply about this and wants to contribute in bringing about a change. "Using my own images is a way for me to participate, and to speak about issues and problems. Through photographs, we keep on embellishing reality in a way that is not healthy. It is interesting how photographs can also let you dematerialise the real."

The power of a camera to flatten the space between the two and three-dimensional makes her uncomfortable. She says, "I love photography, but I also really hate it. I am so subject to the desire of it, and how photography engenders consumerism in our culture. The kind of knowledge that is gained from photography is not the kind of knowledge gained from material experiences. Photography serves to alienate us. I am very ambivalent about photography and the type of information it offers."

At the same time, Laura admits that photography remains one of her muses. She likes printing her photos in lifesize. "I want to create a sense of proximity and

"I am stifled by the inescapability of romance. It is a tremendous distraction."



tangibility when the viewer stands in front of my images. I don't show my images with any glass in front of them. This creates a sense of vulnerability," says Laura.

The progression of Laura's work shows an essence of passive aggressiveness.

Her spatially perplexing photographs have a certain defiance wrapped around them. Her photos appear quiet and serene, but a deeper look makes you realise that, if you take a breath, the whole thing could come tumbling down. **EP**

● **Untitled 47, from III Form and Void Full, 2014.** "Pictures can be unromantic but can also induce sensations" says Laura.



Bandeep Singh
is the Photo Editor
of 'Fortune India'.
A recipient of the
Charles Wallace Trust
Award in photography,
he was formerly
the photo editor of
'India Today'.

Blank Verse Soliloquies

Bandeep Singh ponders over contemporary photography trends, with a visual experiment he did at the recently concluded **Delhi Photo Festival**.

The Delhi Photo Festival, whose latest edition concluded recently, churned a vortex of ideas. Engaging displays put up with a lot of imagination, sucked in attention and loaded it with information. The saturated brains were then pureed in the lectures, artist talks, and discussions. Three days later, I was brimming with ideas, insights, new roadmaps and questions. This is about the questions.

Photo festivals articulate current trends and new dialects in photography. Since DPF 2013, I am increasingly seeing a new approach in terms of photographers presenting bodies of work. More often now, there is the emergence of seemingly imperfect random and unrelated images, bunched into a body of work. Now increasingly frequent on popular photography sites like LensCulture, Petapixel and a lot of individual photoblogs, such work appears to be in contrast to the structured narratives of social documentary and journalistic work.

At their best, these are images seeking to be free of the yoke of 'correct' framing, studied composition and clichéd reportage. They play out more like strokes in an abstract painting or strains of free flowing *aalaap* in classical vocal music. There, they emerge as graphs of mood and inner states rather than a depiction of what is tangible.

Then, there is a counterpoint. For a generation of photographers, photography's core association with the depiction of 'what is' largely governs the patterns of its consumption. Its expansion into an art form allows for imaginative transformations of reality. Even in those departures, the consideration of 'what is real' or 'how far from real' still forms the locus of the image play.

For practitioners who have fashioned their craft with the real and tactile—on

the anvil of specific structures like the decisive moment, the studied frame, the dramatic empathy of photojournalism or the language of popular visual culture, these unhinged, seemingly banal images often appear evasive of rigour and craft.

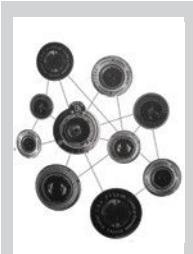
When questioned with what David Campany (in the keynote address of DPF) termed as 'suspicion', such work intermittently emerges as self indulgent and conveniently ambivalent. These 'non-linear narratives' are garbed in the spirit of free expression. They emerge as 'new voices' in not wanting to make linear sense. But the sense has to be created to provide purpose—to make them intelligible. For that, the gaps in the narrative structure are injected with copious amount of text—reminiscent of the jargon that underscores a lot of contemporary art. The photograph that hitherto had the power of a thousand words now needs a thousand words to be intelligible.

I see this as a new emergent language in photography—a transition perhaps—a fissure of expression opening up as a result of the explosion of images in our mindspace. It is something like when lyrical poetry and its metres were replaced by structures of blank verse. That blank verse, then, making more poets than poetry.

I did a personal experiment to stage this expression. The guiding inspiration came from the DPF 2015 logo. The interconnection of the lines between lenses served as the base equation. While attending the photo festival and walking through the space, I made some images around the exhibits, on my cellphone. I then picked portions of text from different artist statements to connect with my images. I wanted to see if the images would, in this way, appropriate more layered subtexts.

On these wings, the distance the images fly from their actual context is the new territory of photography.

"The photograph that hitherto had the power of a thousand words now needs a thousand words to be intelligible."



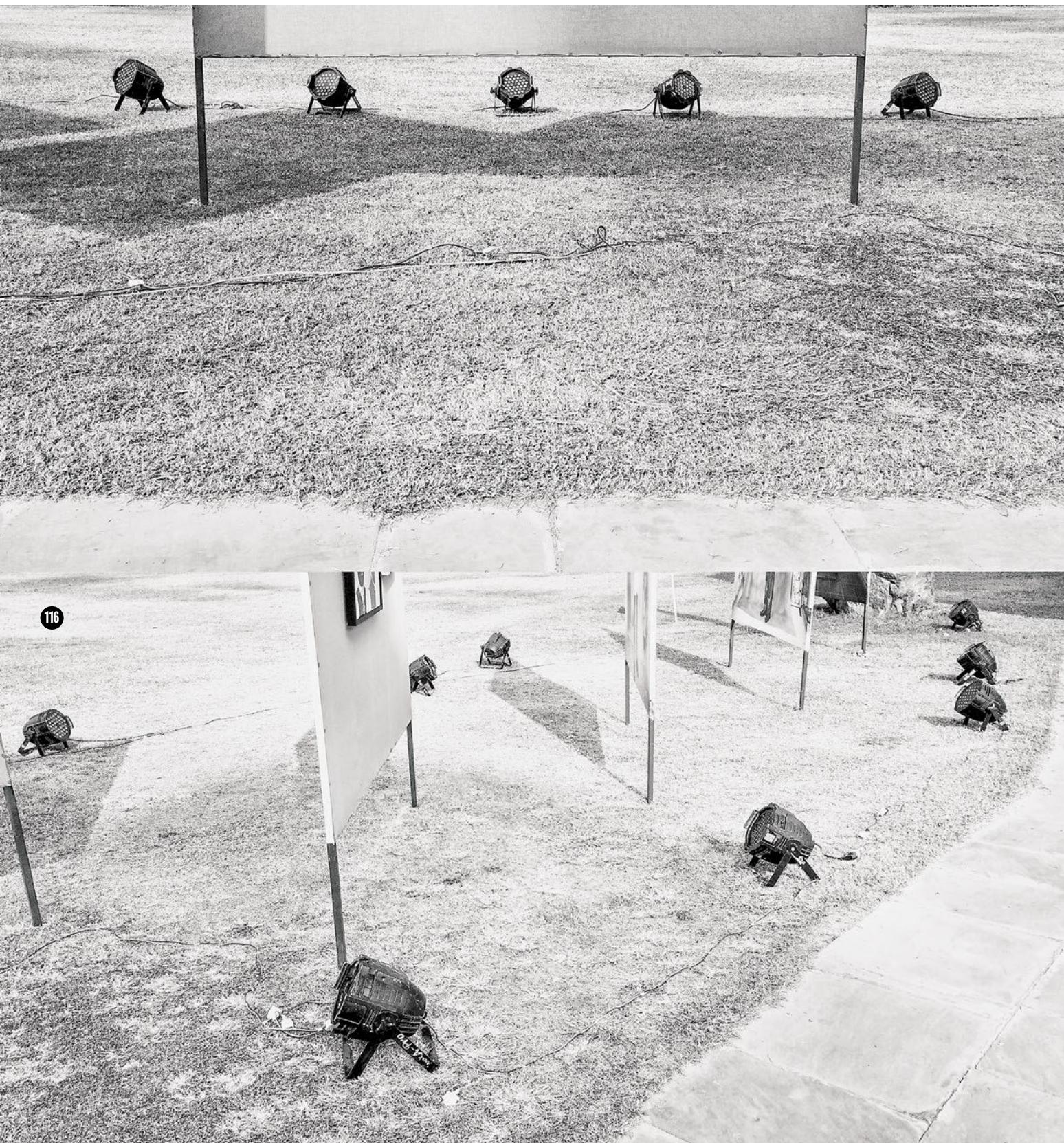
The signage within the DPF 2015 logo that inspired my experiment.



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Photograph #1

“To experience landscape is to practise it,
to place it in contradiction, thus
creating a peripheral vision... images of
images, representations of representations.”

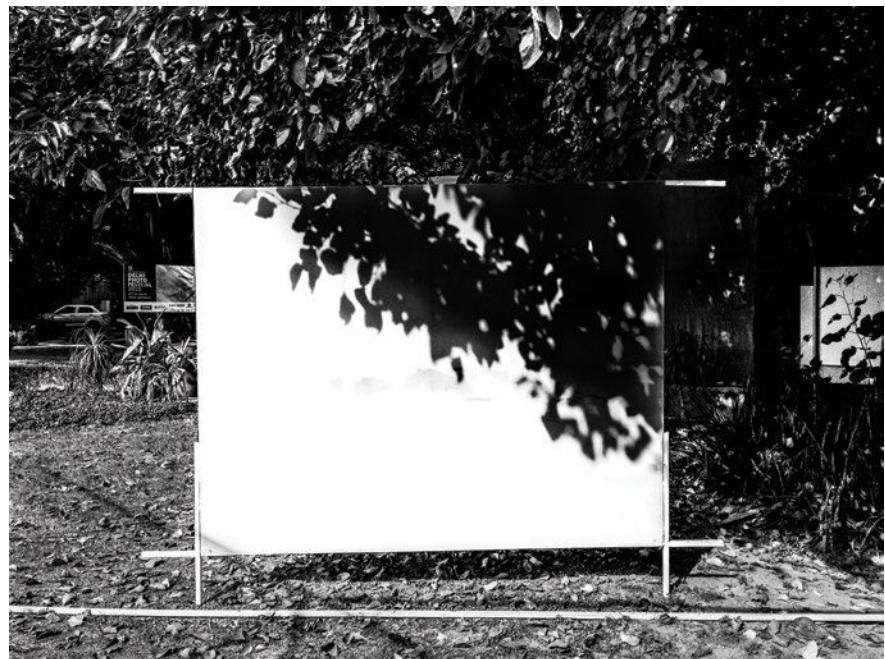


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Photograph #2

“Images help to uncover a new set of visual and existential connections that are not on the surface.”

“Halfway between dreamt up images suspended between documentation and fiction, reality swiftly moves from obviousness to abstraction. The visible becomes minimalistic, ghost-like, a breathtaking void.”



Photograph #3

“I am not what I look like.”



Photograph #4



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“The state of flux... a constant transition between reality and imagination. We are all in a continual flow moving from one state to another.”

“This iconographic and spatial journey was constantly at the threshold of the ancestral India we traditionally visualise.”



Photograph #6

“An exploration of the surreal lives that exist in these artificial spaces.”

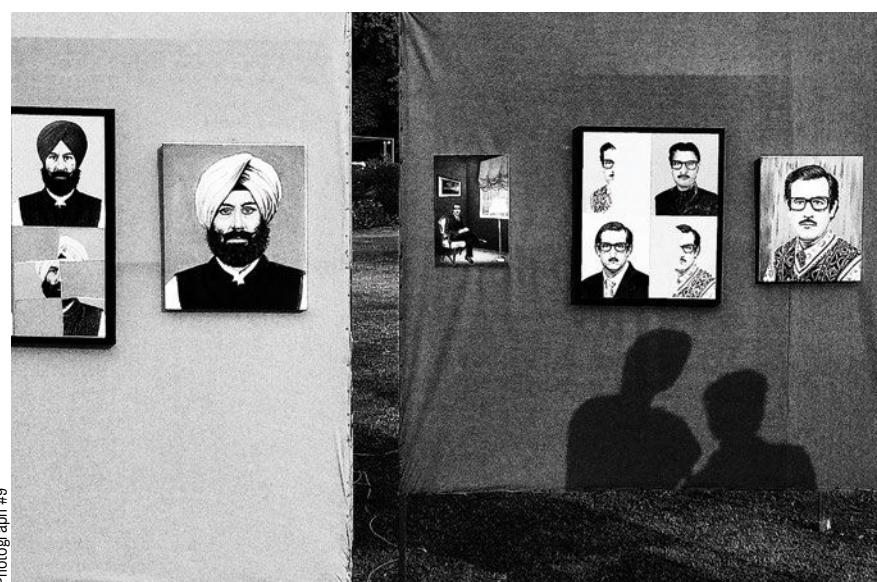
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Photograph #7



“There is recklessness in the air, a very palpable thirst for modernity that appears to be built on layers of oblivion.”



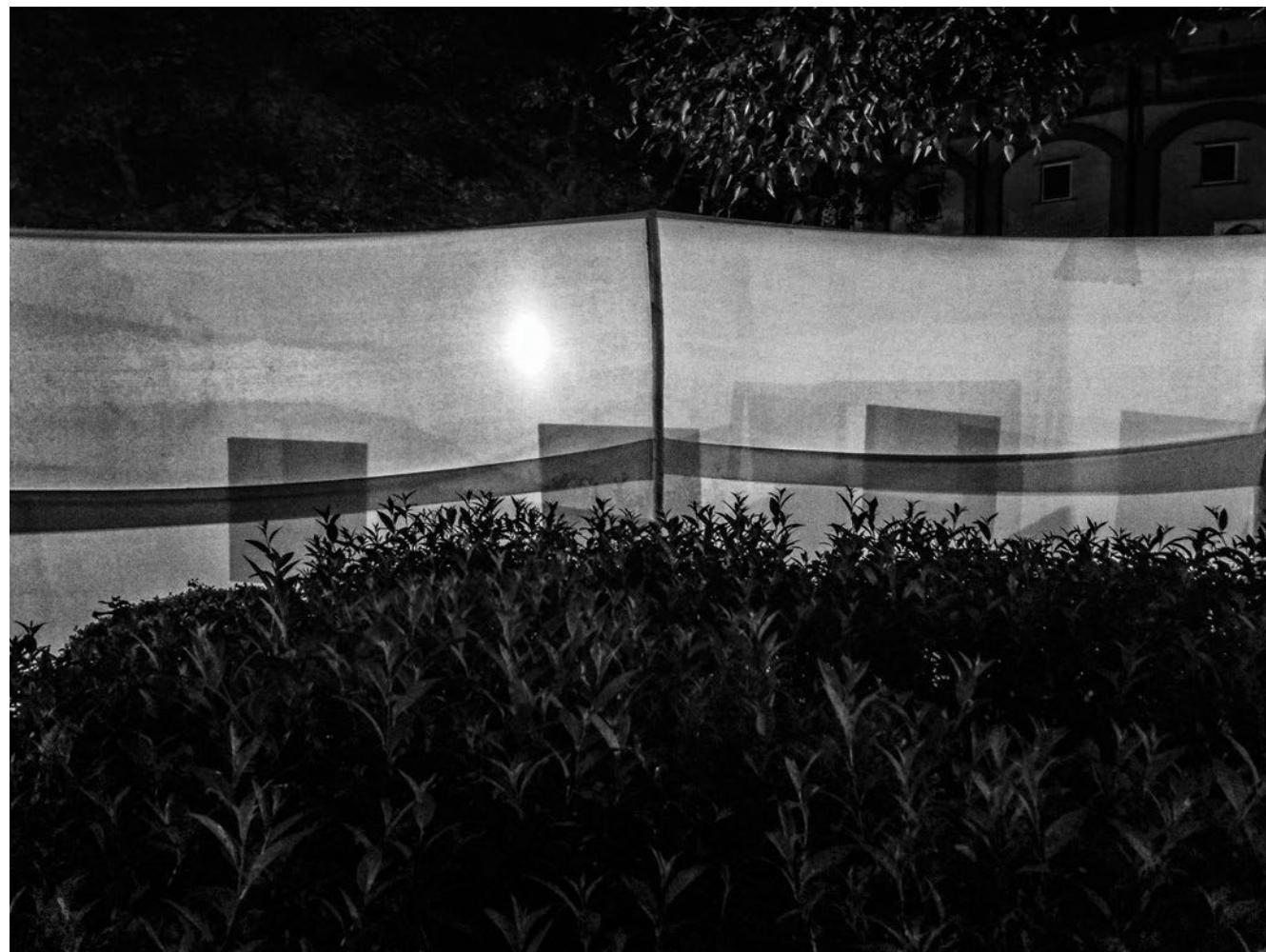
“I am interested in the voices of those who represent our societal projections... no one wants to identify as the stereotype the picture presents them as.”

“An abstract world that requires time to decipher... perspective and abstraction permits an investigation on the ability of our contemporary territories to deliver any form of intelligibility or any proof of vernacular identity.”



Photograph #10

“It is a survival in an apocalyptic landscape.”



Photograph #11

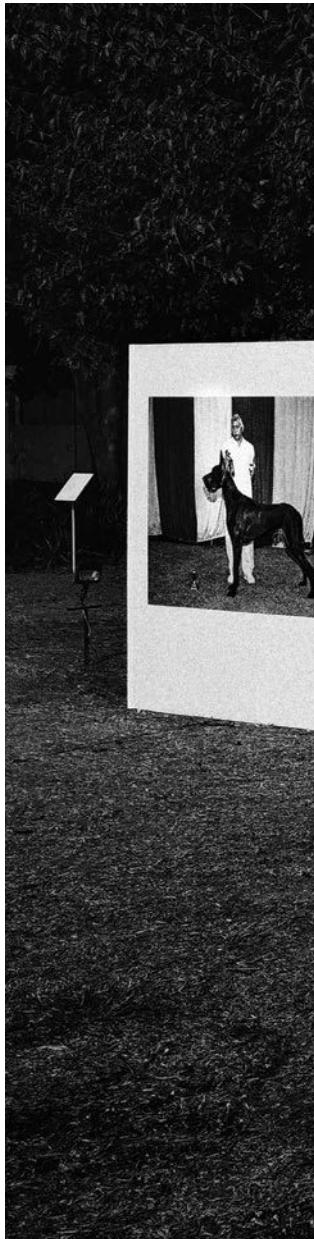


Photograph #2

122 “It’s a case of oversensitive empathy throwing the mind forward into a simulated other... feeling and sensing... as though they are part of your own physical self.”



Photograph #3





Photograph #4

“Dogs beckoning us the same way humanity reaches out to her own gods asking the almighty the reason behind their suffering.”

“An essay of the critical unconsciousness of individuals submerged by social inertia in apathy to all historical matters that surround them.”

TEXT SOURCES

- #1: From *The Two Labyrinths* by Michel Le Belhomme
- #2: From *In the Footsteps/Ballet* by Sahil Vasudeva
- #3: From *The Two Labyrinths* by Michel Le Belhomme
- #4: From *The Identity of a Tomato Picker* by Dario Bosio
- #5: From *Sleepwalker* by Karthik Subramanian
- #6: From *Undercurrents* by Ian Teh
- #7: From *India 50/50* by Alejandro Gomez de Tucco
- #8: From *Phnom Penh of the Future* by Marylise Vigneau
- #9: From *Morphosis* by Jenni Holma
- #10: From *Borders* by Jeremie Lenoir
- #11: From *The End* by Ronny Sen
- #12: From *Exabytes* by Debasish Chakrabarty
- #13: From *Perfect Citizens* by Arturo Betancourt
- #14: From *Wet Dog* by Sophie Gamand

All photographs by Bandeep Singh, shot on an Android cellphone.

A selection of some of
the best images from the
Indian mainstream media

1000 Words





Aadesh Choudhari,
DNA

Charred Lives

A fire raged through the shanties of Damu Nagar in Kandivali, Mumbai, killing two people, injuring over 11 and displacing many others, on 6 December. Several people lost their worldly possessions in the devastation and are trying to rebuild their lives, and are looking to the government for much-needed aid. Grief, as the photographer has captured in this image, is a common sight at the temporary shelters, while hope seems scarce.

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Down by the River

Every year, Chhath Puja sees devotees flock to river banks in order to offer their prayers to the Hindu Sun God. Polluted waters are a harsh reality that seems to be ignored in our country. The photographer really drives home the fact that water conservation is a much neglected issue in our country. He also portrays the all important role that faith plays in India as devotees are willing to wade through the polluted banks of River Yamuna.

Neeraj Priyadarshi,
The Indian Express



Praveen Khanna,
The Indian Express

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Pride and Politics

Indian politics is rarely devoid of drama, as was the case in the first winter session of the Delhi Assembly. The Speaker ordered marshalls to remove Leader of the Opposition, Vijender Gupta from the House, following heated arguments over alleged statements made in the media. As he was unceremoniously escorted out, the photographer's frame captured drama, amused observation and duty all at once.



Hello from the Other Side

As a surprisingly large number of people amassed on both sides of the Haldi Bari border between India and Bangladesh, they exchanged gifts. While hundreds of Bangladeshi residents migrated to India as part of a former enclave. The image captures a moment of tenderness between families separated by the border, as this is their only way of showing their affection.

Shubham Dutta,
The Indian Express



Incredible and Intolerant

Aamir Khan's statements about the atmosphere of growing intolerance in India, resulted in a string of debates, protests and outrage across the country. As Hindu Sena activists demonstrate outside his house in Mumbai, the photographer captured the fervour that misplaced nationalism can bring.

Aadesh Choudhari,
DNA

Through the Smog

New Delhi's atmosphere has become a serious cause for concern as pollution levels have reached dangerous levels. This early morning photograph of people walking through the haze along the Yamuna flood plains, presents a startling view of this potential catastrophe.

Oinam Anand,
The Indian Express



The Story Behind the Picture

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Photograph by:
Edward Steichen

Image Source:
The J Paul Getty Museum

Dreamy, Moody and Ethereal

Edward Steichen photographed *The Pond-Moonlight* in 1904, in the wetlands around Mamaroneck, New York. It is an iconic pictorialist photograph that shows the woods surrounding the pond, where the moonlight streams through the trees and reflects upon the water. Steichen, who was famous for curating *The Family of Man*, created this 41 x 50.8 cm image, by manually applying multiple emulsions of gum bichromate over platinum to introduce colour in the picture. The woods at dusk was one of his favourite subjects, which he returned to time and again in the years before the First World War. Only three prints of this photograph are known to exist, two of which are held by the MET and MoMA respectively.

In 2006, the third print of this image was sold for USD 2.9 million in a two-day private auction at Sotheby's New York, setting a world record for the most expensive image sold at an auction. This record was broken by Andreas Gursky in 2007 for his image *99 Cent II*. Currently, Gursky's *Rhein II* holds this record. The uniqueness of *The Pond-Moonlight* is that it explores the limits of a photography plate and bears an impressionistic quality of early photography. ■